THE THREE KINGS,

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

EMILY BOWLES.

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'The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the earth to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God.' BROWNING.

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TO

MINNA, DUCHESS OF NORFOLK,

IN LOVING TOKEN

OF THE

KINDNESS OF MANY YEARS.

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THE THREE KINGS.

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BALTHAZAR.	Chief Steward to Herod.
HEROD.	Centurion of the Guard.
JOÏADA the High Priest.	Officers, &c.

SCENE I. *Midnight. The plains near Nimroud. A few tents spread in the distance gleam white in the moonlight.*

Upon the steps of the half-ruined tower BALTHAZAR *stands watching.*

Bal. Ye scatter'd worlds, that strew yon purple arch,
Burning with mystic fire, self-fed, unquench'd,
Age-worn, yet ever young,—I watch your course,
Rising and setting—scan your secret laws,
Your hours of waxing, change, and ebbing wane,
And spell your power to mould the fate of man.

Long ages past, the Syrian sheik enshrined
Orion's bands in verse sublime, and own'd
The gentle power of silvery Pleïades;
But now my soul is ever stretching forth
To seek some farther sign. The axled earth
Rolls out of its ellipse; the equinox
Falls from its course; summer and winter rush
Together; seas and solid lands are mix'd,
And all the circles of fast-moving orbs
Are shaken from their strength as if amazed.
Four times ten ages have revolved since first
The light was pour'd in fruitful streams on earth;
Since first the formless matter gather'd up
To shape and colour, heat and rain, and growth.
So much as this th' Arabian sages teach.
And when the waters sank, and left the boat
Of God's own chosen seed on Ararat;
When the great emir and his threefold race
Spread from Assyrian plains across the world,
Four empires were to rule, each after each—
The seed still springing from the root decay'd—
And each a little wider broadening out
Its limits and its language; stretching forth
To wider empire as the years grew on.
Assyria, Persia, Greece, have shone and set;
And great Rome's shadow broadens past its noon,

The fourth and last predestined. Then what next?
What next? My mind has stretch'd beyond all ken,
In fast, and watch, and prayer, through midnight hours,
Till all the framework of material things,
All both that was and is becomes a speck,
A mote, an atom in the vault of space;
And I myself reach forth beyond myself,
Till I am lost in the great mind of God.
O God, where art Thou? How shall I find Thee
In this veilèd blankness? Dost Thou hear me,
See me, touch me? Ay, lead me by the hand?
Spy out my goings to and fro, and count
My very hairs? Dost Thou watch me sleeping,
Watch me waking, fend me from all evil,
Still lead me as a father leads his child?
This is the God I seek, and Him alone.
Perchance more fasting lean—

BALTHAZAR, MELCHIOR.

Mel. Balthazar! Thou?

Bal. [*gravely bends low*] Balthazar greets thee, Melchior, king and sage!

Mel. Methought I heard thee speak of fasting lean,
And wasting down the body, that the mind
May gaze through all its chinks: an ancient crank,
Long practised, so they tell me, on the plains

Of rice-grown Indus and those worlds beyond;
Where the lean bonze, or fakeer, stretches out
His skeleton, and dries, and falls to death.
I loathe the notion, dear Balthazar!

Bal. Why?

Mel. First, for its unnaturalness. At birth
The mind is seal'd within its cell of flesh,
Furnish'd with wondrous outlets—open doors
And windows for its questions; eyes to see,
A tongue to speak, swift ears with drum so fine,
That the least rustling wind or falling leaf
Plays on them its own music. Nay, the mind
Reflects itself thereon, and hate, and love,
Suspicion, malice, and the inner thoughts
Of subtlest heart are printed by the voice
On that frail texture; but on *conditions.*

Bal. What conditions?

Mel. That the enclosing flesh
Be sound and in its normal state of health;
Health which means *wholeness,* as it first was framed;
Wholeness increased and buttress'd-up by care
To cherish and refine it—not destroy.
If thou art foodless, sleepless, on the rack
Of search and question, wringing hard-won lore
From natural secrets spread about us;
Weighing and testing, watching every change

In earth's great garment of external things;
Thou wilt most surely overreach thy strength,
Lose all the balance of the fine-poised brain,
And waste the oil of life to muddy lees.
What dost thou seek to-night?

Bal. [*hesitating, then says*] I seek some sign
Of God that never yet has been bestow'd.

Mel. Ne'er yet? Aha! Is some new God afoot,
Or is He wont to change?

Bal. No change in Him,
The same to-day as ever. But He veils
His face for some appointed time, and then
Bursts forth in light. I think that time has come.

Mel. Why should you think it? Yonder sprinkled vault,
The throne of eldest gods, still lights its lamps
Of shimmering deathless suns and chanting worlds,
Which run their course to-night as when first cast
Upon the floor of space: Orion's belt
Bejewell'd still; and Cassiopeïa's Chair
Gleams yet as steadfast; while the sparkling Lyre
Looks still upon the plains with sleepless eye.
I see the signs of interchanging life
And constant sameness; and I call *that* God,
Greatest of all gods, one that lives and lasts!

Bal. God's fruits and outer robe you see—not Him;

He is within you, Melchior, in your soul.
He guides your conscience, stirs your secret will
To serve Him, and for Him to serve all men.
Thus do I turn me to the Sibyl's word:
'God shall be born of virgin womankind,
And walk upon the earth—a Man with men.'
For this I wait, and watch, and nightly pray,
Till starry midnight yields todawn of day.

[BALTHAZAR *slowly ascends the steps of the tower to the first platform, and kneels, as before, in prayer.*

CASPAR, MELCHIOR, BALTHAZAR *in the distance.*

Cas. Hail, royal sages! So ye the watch the stars?
Mel. Balthazar watches. That contents me too.
He scans that time-worn book, I bide on earth;
For surely we were made for that?
Cas. For that,
And more! I cannot read the skies like him,
But I can watch his mind and think with him;
And then I see the shore and sheltering port,
As with a wicker skiff one hugs the land.
Mel. [*disdainfully smiling*] Is it advisable to put to sea
At all in wicker-work? Most lowly sage,
I'd rather venture all in solid ships,
And founder in the deep blue sea, than creep
Like herring-trawler round the weedy coast,
And rot in trawling.

Cas. Melchior, do not scoff;
We surely need not either rot or drown,
But follow some sure guide to harbourage.
I know you know it, Melchior, though you feign
Full often gibing mood and biting word,
And raise some doubt you feel not; 'tis your way.

Mel. Say on, dear Caspar; much your loving words
And simple trust lift up my doubting mind,
And anchor it in peace.

Cas. [*pauses a few moments*] I am not skill'd—
Too well you know it—in the lore of books:
The parchment rolls smell musty, and the blots
And wayward strokes of ink affront mine eyes.
I hate the frequent use of other minds,
And wearisome repeating of stale words,
Chew'd cud of thoughts no higher than my own.
'He thinks' and 'They think' yield me no ripe fruit,
But rather dwarf the fruitage of my tree.
But if I wait and work, and pray each day
To know what path to take, which road avoid,
What thing is truth, what seeming, then I find
Within me *somewhere*, dimly, but with light,
The vision of fair truth and law of life,
Which spreads before me like a clear-drawn map,
With bounds and limits, waymarks and hedged roads.
So do I say that there are laws within,

Unseen, unheard, far higher than without,
Which guide our sense and reason; higher laws
Than those which teach to sift the dust of earth,
To weigh the dew, the clouds, or even watch
The acts of inward strife—love, hope, rage, fear,
And all the storms of being. Thus these laws
I hail with reverence, watch their loving growth
Within me *somewhere*, pray their light may shine
Each day upon my life, and wait the end.

Bal. [*rises, and comes down the steps*] And at thy wise
child-loving words it comes,
Dear Caspar! See, the rosy brightening East
Yields some new portent from its crimson bars.
No dawn is this, and yet 'tis glorious day.

[*The three Magi watch the sky in awed silence, as out of the growing brightness the Star rises, large and glittering, above the horizon.* BALTHAZAR *and* CASPAR *kneel.* MELCHIOR *stands in rapt amazement. Choir of Cherubim heard very far above them in the air.* MELCHIOR, *after the first few notes, kneels, and then falls prostrate on the ground.*

Chorus of Cherubim.

Lo, where the presage of eternal day
Gleams on the silent night,
Breaks on a world forlorn,
Lifts the dark curtain of past ages gray,
Hails the great King new-born,
And sheds the lasting light of truth on earth's decay.

Long, long we bore the burden'd ages' moan,
Seeking for God in vain,
Finding and losing still;
While pain and woe and wail made ceaseless groan,
Wrestling with erring will;
Till broke the earth-cry like sea-waves against God's throne.

Angels, Archangels, vainly bow'd them down,
Veiling their faces bright,
Yearning to haste the day
When God's Begotten should creation crown;
Sealing His image-clay,
And branding even sin and loss as aye His own.

Let, then, the peoples gather in one tide,
Rolling towards the light,
Casting their bonds away;
Still spread His name through earth's lone desert wide,
Bring worlds to His meek sway,
And to the living Bridegroom bind the fragile bride.

Lo, then, the Day-star of a royal hour,
Leading through unknown ways,
Beyond all earthly ken,
Gifting the worlds unborn with priceless dower.

Glory to God and men!
Glory to God new-born, new clad in kingly power!

[*As the last sounds vanish, spiring upward,* MELCHIOR *rises and touches* BALTHAZAR *on the shoulder.*

Mel. Let us away, dear brother. O forgive—
Forgive with large compassion all my sins
Of scoffing gibe and lightness!
Bal. [*embracing him*] Rather thou
Forgive my poverty of heart and mind,
That never gauged the springs of royalty
In thy great soul! Where should we haste then, now?
Cas. [*eagerly*] Away, as Melchior will, to seek our King!
Bal. What was my love compared with yours, great kings?
Often ye call'd me master, but this hour
The children lead and teach their father! Stay,
We may not rush before our King with empty hands
Unfill'd. Our wealth of gold and gems is His,
And we must yield Him tribute of His own.
Mel. 'Tis well said, Balthazar. I have no gold,
But stacks of fragrant myrrh and amber gums,
And balsams from far Araby the glad,
And precious oils distilling perfumes rare;
These will I seek and load in fretted shrines.

[*Exit.*

Cas. I too must seek my stores; till dawn, farewell!

[*Exit.*

BALTHAZAR *alone.*

I thank Thee, Lord of Light and Truth Divine,
That Thou art come to visit us at last!
Words have I none to utter my content,
Nor voice to hymn Thy goodness; take my heart,
My life, my service! Gold and gems I'll seek;
But they are only dross, already Thine.

[*Scene closes.*

SCENE II. *Jerusalem. Herod's palace, with its magnificent white-marble pillars and galleries shining in the sun, and towering high above the loftiest turrets on the city walls.*

Guards, soldiers, and officers at every entrance. A Centurion, in a rich uniform, lounging up and down. The three Magi, with several slaves and a loaded camel, come into the courtyard.

Centurion [*courteously*]. What seek ye, men of Eastern garb and mien?

Mel. Yes, we are Easterns; come across the wild
To seek the Jewish King. His star we saw
Declaring Him new-born. We pray thee, say
How we may find Him.

Cent. [*smiling and bowing*] I pray your pardon,
But our king was not born yesterday. Nay,
I think his wisdom-teeth are mostly grown!

Permit me to conduct you to the steward
Who ushers strangers; if I mistake not,
You live beyond the walls of cities; lack
The news of Roman couriers and the wheels
Of postmen. Will you follow me, or wait
The steward within the outer hall?

Bal. We wait
Your courtesy, nor trouble you with more;
We seek the knowledge only for our quest.

[*Exit Cent.*

Mel. [*smiling disdainfully*] How quick
The gibes of courtlings! How they disbelieve
In aught beyond their round of eye and ear!
The greatest king to them is he whose throne
Is stuff'd with softest wool, and thickest smirch'd
With brassy gold. O, would that we were hence!

Bal. Be patient, dearest brother! See, he comes.

Cas. And with him a twin-shadow, smiling wide
And waving jewell'd hands. I too must say
I would this work were done.

Steward. [*bowing low with feigned respect*] All hail to you,
Great Eastern lords! for so I see ye are,
And worthy of all honour. Do ye seek
The Court of Herod for himself or not?

Mel. Herod we know not, but have seen the star,
rising in our Eastern skies, of One

Who is known as King of the Jews. Tell us
His city and where it lies, that swiftly
We thither speed, and yield Him homage due.

Stew. [*smiling*] O sage, there is no Jewish king but one,
And that is Herod, our Herod the Great,
Son of Antipater, Idumean;
Raised by Augustus to the Jewish crown,
Not without heart-burnings of the old sects
Which rage among the Jews. You know their blood
Is always tinctured—so they say—with gall,
That gall the bitterest—theologic!
But may I know what brings ye all this way
On quest of king apocryphal?

Bal. The faith
That He alone is royal. His great star
Hath shined before our eyes; and we are come
To seek Him, knowing we shall find.

Stew. [*aside to Cent.*] Stay you
And watch, while I go learn great Herod's will.
Some plot, perchance, is hatching with that brood
Of Pharisees. Be courteous; pray them wait.

[*Exit.*

Mel. This is no palace of our King. His ways
Are not the ways of these. Let us go hence.

Bal. Yet wait and hear. Let patience purge your fire.

Cas. Wait, brother; waiting ripens our desire.

Steward, the same.

Stew. The king commands you seek the Sanhedrim,
The Jewish Council, now debating laws
And customs of their nation. Follow me.

[*Scene closes.*

SCENE III. *The Jewish Sanhedrim.*

The Doctors of the Law and chief Scribes, in their furred gowns, are seated in a ring round the Chief Priest JOÏADA. *One or two standing up seem to have been discussing some point with great interest and eagerness.*

MELCHIOR, CASPAR, BALTHAZAR, *and* Steward.

Stew. Great chiefs and doctors of the Jewish faith,
Herod commends to you these Eastern kings,
Far-travelled on a quest which you should know;
They speak of some great new-born Jewish King;
I leave you thus to search and sift this thing.

[*Bows profoundly, and exit.*

Sabuda. [*to the High Priest*] Great lord and priest, these are the Eastern kings
Who have been asking at the Golden Gate
For some new mystic star that led them on
To Hierosolyma. Along the streets
And in the market every man they met

They question'd where the Jewish King was born,
That they might pay Him homage. Thus the noise,
First trickling like a mountain streamlet weak,
Swell'd wave on wave, and gathering turbid flow
Now whelms both court and city in one flood.

Joïada. [*to the Kings*] I pray you, royal strangers, nearer draw,
And let us know your errand. Be it good,
We gladly shall assist you. Be it ill,
Our minds shall bend the most persuasive force
To turn you from it.

Bal. We gladly thank you,
And know ourselves much honour'd. We are come
From the far East to seek the Jewish King,
Whose star assures us He is born; that King
Who ever was expected, holy, wise,
To reign o'er all the world. A Mother Maid—
'Twas prophesied—should bear this wondrous Child,
And of His kingdom there should be no end.

Joïada. [*starting, rises and comes forward, while all the Sanhedrim is stirred and excited*]
The Prophet's very words! The Messias!
[*To Bal.*] How could you know this thing? Who taught it you?

Bal. In midnight watch, and prayer with fasting made,

God speaks, and pours His light upon the soul.

Scribe. [*interrupting*] This is no light at all! Herod is king.

Simon. Herod is ruler, yea; but he may die.

Sabuda. What reckless words are these for strangers' ears?

For shame, great chiefs! Full speech is free to all.

Simon. Yet surely they do harm to seek new kings,
To raise up dangerous questions, stir all minds,
And wake the corpses of expectancy,
Which better 'twere to bury out of sight.

Joïada. Peace, peace, dear Simon! Let us hear the roll
Which Esdra now has open'd. Bring the book,
Good Ruler, and expound the prophecy
Touching the birth of the great Messias.

Ruler. [*opening the roll and reading in a solemn chant*]
'Out of the Book of Isaias, Prophet,
Isaias, the son of Amos: *a root*
Shall spring from Jesse, father of David,
And the Messias bud like Aaron's rod.
A virgin shall conceive and bear a Son,
The mighty One of God, the Prince of Peace,
The Councillor.'

Bal. [*eagerly pressing forward*] Where shall this Prince be born?

Here in Jerusalem, no doubt? O, say
Our quest is ended! Here we live and die.

[*Ruler looks towards Joïada to know if he shall reply.*

Joïada. What saith the Prophet, Ruler? For in truth
The writings much have faded from my mind.

Ruler. [*turns the roll*] In Bethlehem of Judah is He born,
According to the Scripture: '*Bethlehem,*
Among the princes thou art not the least,
For out of thee the Ruler shall be born.'

Bal. [*eagerly*] In Bethlehem? Where is it? Far from hence?

Sabuda. Not far; an hour or two; but tarry now,
And eat and sleep; there is no haste to-night.
These times of prophecy are dim and vague;
We should be sure to hear if He were born.

Mel. Most wisely spoken. Dear Balthazar, stay;
These rulers *must* be warned of their own king.
Be guided; let us tarry here, and learn
The lore of Hierosolyma.

Bal. The lore
I seek, dear brother, is the face of God.
Be not enticed by lore of other gods,
The subtle mind and double wit of man,
And glozing words of earthly wisdom. See,

Our star has vanish'd from this noise of men
And flickering glare of learning. Brothers dear,
I would not leave ye; but if you persist
In Hierosolyma to rest—farewell!

Cas. I will go with you, dear Balthazar. No,
My Melchior; I must turn you deafen'd ears
If you would plead against him. He has been
Our master, guide, and father; where he leads
I follow; if he errs, with his mistakes
I shall be wiser still than wiser men.
O yield, dear Melchior! Perchance this night
The star may shine upon our King.

Mel. I yield;
Your childlike faith shames all my seeming love;
And, Caspar, if that heaven-born King we find,
You open-eyed have seen Him—I was blind!

[*The Kings, saluting the High Priest and Council, are going out. Sudden clash of shawms and shouts outside. Many voices burst into a wild melody.*

Chorus of Jewish Children.

Strike, strike the harp and timbrel loud with cunning hand,
Let shawm and psaltery sweep soft by Kedron's wave,
Bid rushing waves of melody fill all the air;
Immanuel is born!

Drop down, ye heavens, your fleecy clouds in tender
dew;
Bloom out, thou agèd earth, be clad in flowery meads;
Rise up and shine, Jerusalem, Jerusalem;
Immanuel is born!
Let Judah's towers exult, let Zion's holy hill,
Jehovah's chosen dwelling-place, rejoice and sing;
For hark! the Mount of God doth echo back our cry,
Immanuel is born!
Messiah, hail! Hail, Flower of Jesse's budding rod;
No more shall Israel in bondage sigh and groan;
The harp of David hang by Babel's streams no more;
Immanuel is born!
Strike, strike the harp, Immanuel is born!

Steward and Officer, the same.

Stew. O Eastern sages, my unworthy lips
Do bid you to great Herod; that ye lend
The light of your far-reaching, subtle minds
To read the myst'ry of your star-shown King.
Bal. I pray your pardon, but we are in haste
To Bethlehem. Excuse us to your king.
Officer. This may not be. You must permit us, sage.
Mel. [*aside to Bal.*] Come with them, dear Balthazar;
'tis as short
To yield as wrangle.

Bal. [*to Stew.*] Pray you, pardon, sir;
We follow you.

[*Exeunt Melchior, Caspar, Steward, and Officer.*

O Lord, my loving Lord,
Make short our waiting till we see Thy face!

[*Scene closes.*

SCENE IV. *A magnificent hall of audience.*

HEROD, *seated on a rich throne raised on a dais covered with a thick carpet of purple and gold. The King's robes and tunic sparkle with jewels. Officers and state-ministers stand beside or near the throne.*

MELCHIOR, CASPAR, BALTHAZAR, *Steward, and Officer bowing to the ground.*

Herod. I welcome you! I hear you come from far
To seek some royal Jewish Child foretold.
And I would profit, too, of your deep lore,
And pay Him homage. I was placed by Rome
Upon this throne; but well ye know
The thorns that line a crown. Fain, fain would I
Cast royal robe aside, and dwell with you
In some far wild, remote from noise of men.
What caused ye seek this Child?

Bal. His star arose
In splendour in the East. Too long would be
The telling how we knew and hail'd the sign.

But this is sure, great Herod; as we live
Before you here, the Jewish King is born!

Herod. [*striving to hide his rage and envy*] But why the *Jewish* King?

Bal. [*solemnly*] Because from Him
All sov'reignty on earth shall be renew'd,
And He shall reign the last and only One.
We cannot understand it, nor, O king,
Can earthly knowledge pierce the mystery.
We only know it is so; and the wise
And learnèd of your Jewish Sanhedrim
Have this day crown'd our knowledge with their own,
By words writ down in old prophetic rolls,
And sayings handed down traditional,
Of Him they look for.

Herod. [*eagerly, yet scoffingly, to Sabuda*] What didst thou tell them,
Great Sabuda—thou learnèd Pharisee,
Full of the Hebrew Scriptures, Prophets, Psalms,
And all the rest of it? Come, Sabuda,
Pour the light of day on me, poor Herod—
Herod you love not—the Idumean—
And let us sally forth and find our King!

Sab. [*suppressing his rage*] The King you scoff at, Herod, is the Son
Of God Himself, Messias, Who shall reign

A thousand years on earth. Do you not know
That Bethlehem is His birthplace?
Herod. [*laughing scornfully*] Aha!
That poor wretched city, Bethlehem?
Why not Jerusalem—within our gates?
So, then, it lies before ye, sages! Go,
And when ye find your Child-King, bring me word!

[*General stir, laughter, and jeering among the Officers.* MELCHIOR, CASPAR, *and* BALTHAZAR *prostrate and exeunt.*

SCENE V. *A mountain track over stony barren hills, the sky strewn with sparkling stars, but no moon.*

MELCHIOR, CASPAR, *and* BALTHAZAR, *with the two Slaves leading a tired camel. All look weary and cast down.*

Mel. Our quest is surely vain. The guiding star
Is swallow'd up in night. The very night
Seems blacker than is wont: the trackless way
Is lost among the rocks, and we without a guide.
We seek a King, and now have left the king
Seated in splendour on his solid throne;
For Herod *is* king, throned by Cæsar too,
And who would fight Augustus gets hard knocks
And scanty meed.
Cas. [*smiling faintly*] My Melchior, all in vain
You act denial of your love and faith.

You led the way across the wild, and still
Must lead us on. 'Tis little farther now,
The shepherd said, who watch'd his woolly flock
In yonder vale. 'One rocky hill to climb,'
He said, 'and Bethlehem will shine like snow
Thick fall'n upon the plain.'

Bal. Nor rocks, nor night,
Nor gibing world-worn courts shall hinder us,
If we are faithful in our quest. The star
Vouchsafed to guide us we have lost through fear
And listening to the glozing of the world,
Which worships every wooden god it sees—
The gods of ear and eye. A little more
Of loving toil, and then will come reward.

Caspar. [*eagerly pointing to the horizon*]
Reward hath even now outrun desert;
The star is rising; lo, our star once more!

[*As he speaks the rosy brightness spreads and mounts upwards, and the star, larger and more glittering than before, rises slowly in the sky.*

Mel. It moves, it moves! It travels through the air,
It points the way! Ah, see the gates and towns
Like snow fresh strew'd! 'Tis Bethlehem the blest,
'Tis David's city! Let us press on,
Our King is there! O brothers, pardon me!

SCENE VI. *Rocky caves near Bethlehem, covered with ivy and trailing plants. In one of these, once used as a dwelling, and of which the customary ground-floor stable remains, a rude rack and manger are filled with straw. In the background a rough bed covered with a coarse brown cloak.*

MARY *is discovered with the Divine Child in her arms.* JOSEPH *is leaning on his staff in prayer.* MELCHIOR, CASPAR, *and* BALTHAZAR *prostrate at the entrance of the cave. The slaves and camel pause at a distance. When the Kings prostrate, an angelic Choir is heard in the air.*

Chorus of Seraphim.

Where is the glory of Thy Name,
The splendour of Thine hour,
Thy path of lightning-flame,
Thy world-creating power?
No desert flower
Unfolds so meekly to the day
As Saron's royal Rose,
Beside the world's highway;
Its petals fresh unclose
In wintry bower.
Dark clouds aye veil'd Jehovah's form,
No eye might see His face,
He spoke in Sina's storm,
Unseen His dwelling-place;
The day of grace

Deep hidden in the womb of time.
But now the dropping rain
Recalls the earth's fresh prime;
Man lives and breathes again
Renew'd in race.
Throughout the silent, primal years
We watch'd around the throne,
We watch'd the weight of tears
Pleading to God alone.
Belovèd One!
Thy birth hath caused the isles to sing,
The nations hail Thy light;
The faithful greet their King,
And haste through starry night
Their God to own.
Glory to Thee, Immanuel!
Creator, Creature, God!
Thy beauty who can tell,
Sweet Rose from dark-brown sod?
In blest abode
The angels hymn their gladdest strains,
The heavens bow down to earth,
On earth Immanuel reigns;
Creation hails the birth
Of Christ our God.

[*As the voices die away upwards the Divine Child stretches out one hand towards the Magi, bowed down in worship.*

Joseph. Welcome, ye faithful! We have look'd for this,
The crowning of the Birthright, since yon star
Rose gleaming o'er the mountain peak, and hung
Above Jerusalem. Draw near and kiss
The tiny hands that made the earth and sky;
Salute His Virgin Mother: she is glad
To see you.

Mary. I needs must bid you welcome,
Who fly at Jesus' bidding. Royal kings,
Come, kiss His hands and feet. Draw near and love.

Bal. Art thou that Virgin of old prophecy
Foretold to bear a Son? I pray thy name?

Mary. I am that Virgin, handmaid of the Lord;
My name is Mary; Joseph is my spouse.
Behold the Child Who shall redeem the world,
Unbarring heaven's gates to sinful man:
This is the Prince of Peace, the Wonderful,
The Key of David opening mysteries,
And depths of love shall never more be seal'd.

Cas. Will He then take our gifts? Poor gold and gems
Can never please the Maker of all earth,
And Lord of heaven.

Joseph. Say not so, my son;
He loves the poorest gift bestow'd with love;

He loves the giving heart and lending will;
Rewards the very dawning thought of gift.
See how He opens wide His tiny hands.

Bal. [*kneeling again*] Great Lord, our King, we offer
Thee this gold
As symbol of our love; these fragrant gums
As pure burnt-offerings to Thy Godhead true;
This myrrh as sacrifice and lives denied.
O Prophet, Priest, and King, receive and bless.

[*As he spreads out the various offerings, the Divine Child smiles, and turning towards each of the Kings, blesses them in turn with His right hand.*

Mary. [*to Joseph*] Fain, fain my tongue would speak.
[*To the Kings*] Great kings, your faith,
Your loyal urgent love so pure and keen,
Your noble offerings of precious things,
But most the long unwearied quest you make
To find your new-born God, shall richly fruit
Your after-lives and all eternity.
Had ye confess'd the Christ and follow'd not,
Your names had lived in honour to all time;
Or had ye sent an embassage of suit
And service with your homage and due gifts.
But for this instant quitting of your realms,
The state and ease surrounding Eastern kings
And students of all knowledge known or hid,—

For this most swift and noble sacrifice
Of all men live for at an unknown call,
There shall be richer blessing. On your heads
The crowns ye cast aside shall jewell'd shine
Wherever Christ is preach'd for years to come,
Through lands unknown, and nations yet to spring
From the veil'd womb of Time. Forefathers ye
Of sceptres ruling worlds; of kingly priests
Sitting in Moses' chair to give us law,
Binding and loosing chains in earth and heaven,
Whose rule is bounded here by bounds of time,
But carried forward through the gates of heaven;
Salvation was restrict to God's own race,
But your great hearts have smit the Heart of God,
And opened wide the doors to all the world.
O royal Magi! never, never more
Shall grace be pent or cabin'd in one flow,
But spread like lakes, like seas, through your one act,
As when the tide returns and eats the land.
This was decreed when in the mind of God
My image play'd before Him* as the crown
And summit of His love; that one poor girl
Should work His bidding on a sin-lost world,
To rescue drowning man. Ye musing sat
Among life's ruins, piecing here and there,

* 'Ludens coram Eo.'

Discerning, losing still the tangled thread
Which led to no seen end. Your reason taught
That God must be, but not that He be Man.
Your reason carp'd and wrangled o'er the dead
And dying myths of bodied idol gods,
But could not soar above them; for the stars
Which witness brightest of His hand ye turn'd
As gods against Him, and Himself denied.
Then came the tempting fiend, denying all
That might be Godhead; urging joyous life
And earth-born pleasure as the good of man.
Not such your course, great Kings, for stair by stair
Ye toiling mounted day by day tow'rds God,
Denying flesh and mind, and clinging still
To high and higher truth in barren faith,
Bound on a quest ye knew not, nor could know,
Till taught by His Own Self. O royal hearts,
Go forth, and carry hence His hidden Name,
And spread your loving faith through gentile lands!
Go forth, ye blessing blest! A race shall spring
From your great act: new chosen of the Lord,
New fruit of David's stem, ye bear an ark
More sacred than the old. Within the veil
New priests shall bless a Manna still unknown,
And pour fresh healing on diseased souls.
No more! The heavenly visions crowd my mind:

I may not tell them. Lock'd within my heart
They bide. My soul doth magnify the Lord!

Chorus of Angels.

1. O, sing unto the Lord a new song:
   Sing unto the Lord, all the earth.

2. Sing unto the Lord, and bless His Name:
   Tell forth His salvation from day to day.

3. Tell forth His glory among the Gentiles:
   His wonders among all peoples.

4. Praise and beauty are before Him:
   Holiness and majesty in His sanctuary.

5. Bring unto the Lord, O ye kindred of the Gentiles,
   Bring unto the Lord glory and honour:
   Bring unto the Lord glory unto His Name.

6. Let all the earth be moved at His presence:
   Tell ye among the Gentiles that the Lord hath reign'd.

7. Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad:
   Let the sea be moved and the fulness thereof:
   The fields shall be joyful and all things that are therein.

8. Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the
   Face of the Lord, for He cometh:
   For He cometh to judge the earth.

9. He shall judge the world with equity:
   And the people with His truth.

THE GREENE TURFE.

WHEN the greene turfe groweth above thy wearie hedde,
And all this wracke of care to endlesse reste is layde,
What recketh then if laughe or grieving moane
Hath fill'd the breathings of the life that's gone,
Under the greene turfe lying?

If earlie friendes have loved thee, and yet yeare by yeare
Have dropp'd away like winter berries falling sere,
They are but gone to waite thee, love, in pleasante shade
By gray crosse shelter'd and with lowlie daisies spredde,
Under the greene turfe lying.

If thou hast seene thy cherish'd fancies one by one
Changing and dying within thee as the yeares grew on,
Till thou hast ask'd with feare, 'Am I the same, or no?'
Yet cheere thee, love; there is fitting peace for alle belowe,
Under the greene turfe lying.

If thou hast felt the generous yearning love that gleames
Once on each noble hearte in life's deep, troubled streames,
If those still smouldering fires have waken'd into life,
To waste thine aching hearte,—thou wilt not feele their strife
Under the greene turfe lying.

If thou hast been all lonelie in thy pilgrimage,
Nor mortalle worde been given thy bitter paines to swage,
Yet ever twininge reverentlie thy crowne of thorne,—
Ah, cheer thee, love; nor shalt thou ever be forlorne
Under the greene turfe lying.

Joy to the greene turfe sing; hail to the green turfe, then.
He wrappeth kindlie sorrowing and joyous men!
He bindeth mortal earthe in charitie's greene vaile,
A crowne of flowers he giveth to alle, and rustlesse maile,
Under the greene turfe lying.

THE 'KNIGHT OF JESUS.'*

I.

THE flood of Paris students pours,
Like the waves of a stormy sea,
Into the halls of old Sorbonne,
While Notre Dame rings so merrily!
The grave furr'd doctors here and there
Pace slowly to and fro,
And soldier-nobles' milk-white plumes
Lend grace to that proud show,
While Notre Dame rings so merrily!

The tribune fills, the ringing voice
Of young Navarre is clearly heard;
So hush'd is all that mighty throng
They hear each silver-falling word.
He pauses, and the roof is rent
With roar like shock of war,
And doctors grave and students cry,
'The prize to young Navarre!'†
While Notre Dame rings so merrily!

* The epithet once given by Dr. Newman to the sons of St. Ignatius Loyola.

† St. Francis Xavier was of an old Navarrese family.

His fair face flush'd with conscious pride,
His dark-blue eye was downward cast,
He moved one step toward the Judge,
But sudden heard the '*Quid prodest?*'
'What shall it profit to a man
To gain this foolish little world,
If his own dear immortal soul
Must into darksome hell be hurl'd,
And lost for all eternity?'

II.

Farewell the praise of old Sorbonne!
The pen and folio flung away,
'Young Navarre' has exchanged the world
For a Cross and Breviary!
With sharp cords bound on tender limbs,
He acts the pilgrim's fearless part;
The thongs eat into living flesh,
But still that earnest knightly heart
Cries: '*Plura, plura, Domine!*'*

Many a day and month pass by
Before he wends him back again,
Across the smiling lands of France,
To the ripe purple vines of Spain.

* A favourite expression of St. Francis Xavier, meaning 'Give more suffering, O Lord, yet more.'

'Old Spain doth greet thee, young Navarre,
With joy to thy ancestral hearth.'
But he replies: 'I have not time
For joy and human love on earth;
In Heaven's City that may be.'

The shore is gain'd. 'Unmoor, unmoor!
The days are passing swiftly by,
And nations that Christ died to save
Are lost in sin and slavery!'
The sails are spread; how swiftly flies
That bounding ship upon the main!
But one great heart consumed with fire
Still thirsts for sharp and sharper pain.
'O *plura, plura, Domine!*'

III.

The Indian world! 'Enjoy, enjoy,'
The ship's crew cries, 'while now ye can,
These pagans' gold and jewels rare,
And lovely slaves for every man.'
'Not so!' one solemn voice replies.
'Ye Christian men baptised, beware
Lest heathen rise to judge your sin,
And burning gold become your snare
For endless dread eternity!'

The glance of that deep dark-blue eye,
Those burning words that flash'd and fell,
The royal love that flow'd from him,
Broke on them like a magic spell.
Where'er he went with bell in hand,
A lowly blessed influence shed,
And like an Angel's were the words
Which softly thus he sang or said,
Still ringing ever cheerily:

'O, come to me, you children dear,
And I will teach you Christian rhymes
More wondrous than Ellora's caves,
More sweet than Agra's silver chimes.
We'll sit beneath the banyan-tree,
And sing of Mother Mary mild,
Who in the darksome wintry night
Soft rock'd her Blessed Jesus-Child
With Angel's songs and lullabies.'

And ever as he spoke, the bands
Of graceful children swiftly came,
Like flocks of doves that fill the air
When winter-hunger makes them tame.
He led them to the forests old
(Like docile lambs they follow'd him),
And when the Creed was loudly said,

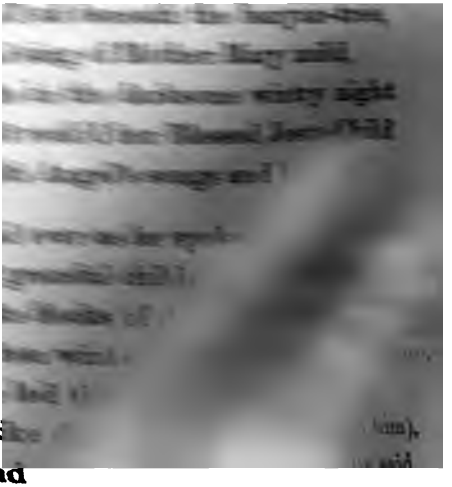
They sang the sweetest childish hymns
To Jesus, Child of Bethlehem.

IV.

Full many a thousand, thousand miles
He sped on India's heathen soil;
That dark-blue eye still deeper sank,
That marble cheek was worn with toil;
Yet still the Cross was raised on high,
The burning words still earnest rise,
'On, on!' He presses to the goal
Of unknown China's fiery skies,
In hourly hope of martyrdom!

'On, on!' O, how the zeal of God
Burns out that virgin gold's scant dross!
'On, on! The hour is come when I
May preach the Gospel's blessed Cross
In Satan's own unrighteous home.
'Tis now the dawn of God's own hour;
To-morrow's earliest streak of day
Shall see me on that outcast shore.
O *plura, plura, Domine!*'

The sun rose crimson from the sea,
That dark-blue glassy Indian sea,
But none went out from Sancian's isle
To loose sin's doleful slavery.



And

Upon the burning sands there lay
One in a pilgrim's well-worn dress;
Thus fell, with Cross upraised on high,
That ever-glorious Navarrese,
With folded flag in victory.

The sun fell down towards the sea,
That dark-blue glassy Indian sea,
But none were there to whisper peace
To Xavier in death-agony.
Alone, alone, upon the sands,
With crucifix still raised on high,
He murmur'd: 'Lord, in Thee I hope
In death and in eternity.
O *plura, plura, Domine!*'

Thus in that starry purple night
That pilgrim lay on burning sand,
While ranks of glittering Angels stood
With shining crown and palm in hand.
And round the spotless awful Throne,
Seraphic, joyful songs rose high,
To see that faithful knight receive
His palm and crown of victory,
While golden bells rang joyfully.

THE FATHERLESS.

(*While working at one time in the Seven Dials.*)

I SAW them sitting on the steps last night,
Three babies side by side;
They could not comfort their poor mother's heart—
Their father's joy and pride.

Upon the one straw bed his body lay,
His life-long toil was done;
And she knelt by, all lost in her great woe,
From noon till set of sun.

I never saw such deep full-tided grief
As made that wife forget
Her mother's love, and drown'd quite out of sight
Those children cold and wet.

Her dark-eyed Mary, Chrissy, little Dan,—
How well I know them all!
Their childish games in that dark court I join,
Both shuttlecock and ball.

But now their laughing eyes are wet with tears;
There's not one piece of bread;
They dare not ask their mother for the milk;
They cannot go to bed.

She has forgotten them. Her love is dead,
And back her life has run
To the rough mountain-side and blue lake-shore,
All glistening in the sun;

Where they two knelt together, bride and groom,
With hearts and hopes all bright,
Thinking of London as a town of gold,
Where all may win who fight.

The vision of that down-bent dusky head,
That glorious trusting smile,
Flits round her like the childish angel-dreams
That we must lose erewhile.

Not now she sees him fierce and hunger-worn,
A ghastly frame of bone;
She cannot think he ever took 'the drop,'
Or left her weeks alone.

Not one, through all those long, dark, dreary years,
'Dear brother—sister' said.
Alone they strove and toil'd, alone they fell,
And down, still lonely, sped.

And now there's dark-eyed Mary, Chrissy, little Dan,—
Will no one help these three?
They wring my heart, still sitting on those steps
In childish misery.

And while I plead for them, I hear His voice,
Who said in Galilee:
'The things ye do for the very least of these,
Those things ye do for Me.'

A STRAY LEAF.

LEAVES dropping softly on the autumn turf,
I watch them sadly in their noiseless fall;
The lengthening shadows of the dying day
To me are friends I never may recall.

The spring-flowers fade, the summer's rosy hours
Are swallow'd up in winter's deathlike gloom;
I cry aloud, I stretch my hands in vain,
I sigh for sunny days and May's sweet vernal bloom.

O foolish heart, in exile wouldst thou rest,
And twine life's brightest garlands round decay?
Rejoice that earthly types mark out thy lot;
Rejoice that thou must daily die each dying day.

SŒUR ROSALIE IN LIFE.*

THE cannons roar; the thick smoke rolling down
Blots out the sunny day;
The gathering crowds of eager workmen pour,
With back and forward sway,

Along the narrow barricaded street,
And through the twisted ways
Which swarm with mothers, daughters, anxious wives,
One universal maze.

The blouse and uniform most strangely mix'd,
Red, white, and blue are seen;
The pike and rifle, bayonet and sword,
With fresh-cut staves between.

All hurrying by, as to one meeting-place,
Tumultuous with a plan;
As if low-murmuring brooks and noisy rills
To one vast river ran.

* This celebrated Sister of Charity was as well known in Paris
lle she lived as the towers of Notre Dame.

Now that vast river to a flood doth swell,
With rushing dreadful flow,
All down the Boulevards and St. Etienne
To the Faubourg St. Marceau.

Then made a short and angry pause—for lo!
The Mouffetard barricade
Was cover'd with the Mobile Garde
In furious brigade.

And fighting desperate with them, hand to hand,
The Paris City-Guard;
They yell, they shout, with frantic savage blows
They strike the timbers barr'd.

And close beside this hellish rout and din,
With praying claspèd hands,
In snow-white cornette and St. Vincent's weed,
Sœur Rosalie there stands.

'Forbear!' she cried, and raised her thin white hands—
How well they knew those hands!—
'Forbear to shed your own dear brothers' blood.
I pray—beseech—command!

O children, cease this mad unhallow'd strife—
The strife accursed of Cain.
Can bloodshed give you bread, your children clothe,
Or bring your harvests rain?'

Then fell a sudden stillness on the waves
  Still swaying to and fro,
As when the crystal walls of Edom's sea
  Stay'd both their ebb and flow.

Then such a sound—above the 'Mother's'* voice—
  As a tempest lull doth moan;
And then the Guard was driven fiercely back,
  And their leader left alone.

A thousand muskets pointed at one aim,
  A moment and he dies!
Then from the barricade he lightly springs,
  Within the porch he flies.

Within that porch was sanctuary sure†
  Which no man dare defile.
All Paris knew the house, and country, too,
  Around for many a mile.

But now, like lava-flood, men's passions rage,
  They own no check, no bounds;
They rush within the gates, with bright swords drawn,
  Like ravenous wolf-hounds.

* Sœur Rosalie was best known as 'The Mother,' or 'The Mother of the Poor.'

† The house of the Sisters in that arrondissement, or parish, was close to the barricade.

For one long hour, like heaven with hell at war,
  Sœur Rosalie pleaded there
With men no longer human, pouring curses wild,
  Tearing their beards and hair.

Then sprang Sœur Rosalie before her band,
  Then fell she on her knees,
With hands upraised, with pleading awful eyes
  She seem'd their rage to freeze.

'O men of Paris, for these twenty years
  You all have known me well.
Who nursed your wives? Who fed your helpless babes?
  Who saw you where you dwell?

When famine struck you, laid you down to die,
  What voices cheer'd your bed?
St. Vincent's Daughters brought you fire and food,
  They buried all your dead.

In garrets lonely, where your daughters hide
  To shun a life of sin,
In cellars, sorting rags and woollen shreds,
  I tried their souls to win.

Not one poor little meed I ask'd in pledge
  Of gratitude to me,
Not one poor pennyworth I ever sought—
  Our love, our alms were free.

For, children, well I knew your faithful hearts
  Through want or lawless strife;
But now I claim my just reward and wage—
  Give me this single life!'

I would that all the world were there to see
  The things that then did chance,
They surely would St. Vincent venerate,
  That Saint of generous France.

The savage fiend-like faces melted then,
  They flung their swords away;
With brothers' love they freely grasp'd the hand
  Of him their enemy.

With tears down-falling on their rugged cheeks,
  They begg'd Sœur Rosalie
To pardon their great fault, and for God's sake
  Their Mother still to be.

It was a blessed sight, both sweet and grand,
  To mark that woman meek,
Returning to her common ways and mood,
  With smile on brow and cheek.

Not lifted up, not too much overcome,
  Not glorying in her sway,

She bade them do their work like Christian men,
And sent them on their way.

So humble, simple, loving souls are sure
Great victories to win;
With single, saintly heart they walk through life,
Unheeding this world's din.

So leaving all, they countless riches gain,
Without its countless snares;
Among life's noblest heroes take their place—
The hundredfold is theirs.

SŒUR ROSALIE IN DEATH.*

THERE was a murmur and a movement in the street,
Dumb, hush'd, and yet athrill;
There was a sorrow and amazement on each brow,
As facing some great ill.

Not now down-pouring in excitement flush'd and wild,
But creeping slow and still,
As though reluctant, and abhorrent of the fact
That forced their backward will.

* At the command of the Emperor Napoleon III. the cross of the Legion of Honour was laid on Sœur Rosalie's grave.

F.

Low sighing voices whisper'd through those serried ranks,
Low murmuring prayers were said,
Low aspirations mingled with fond deep regret
For one they named as dead.

One dead? Yes, hearken to the solemn *bourdon's* tone,*
Deep-tolling from Notre Dame.
Some princely arm just now hath fail'd Imperial France,
She mourns some stately name.

Some noble general of her myriad armies lies
Beneath that heavy pall—
So tell the trailing arms, the booming cannon's roar,
The drooping pennon's fall.

These all proclaim a valorous life and mighty deeds,
Proclaim what France has lost;
Press on to learn for whom our orisons are made,
Win through at every cost.

We breathe at last. The funeral march now makes a pause,
The soldiers circle round,
The crowds in amphitheatre dusk, and hoarsely still,
Make barrier and bound.

* The *bourdon*, or great tenor bell of Notre Dame, is the only one which outlived the Revolution of 1793.

The bier is lifted from the car,—the plumèd heads
Bend low before that freight;
We mark no glittering Cross of Honour on the pall,
And lo! that pall is white.

And through the mighty throng one deep convulsive sob
Runs shivering far and wide.
'Sœur Rosalie is dead!' 'The Mother of the Poor!'
'Sœur Rosalie!' they cried.

Like shock of earthquake, like down-streaming thunder-rain,
Then broke that boundless woe;
With writhing clasping hands, with floods of bitter tears,
They quiver to and fro.

The fierce Zouaves, long scorch'd on Afric's glowing sand,
On Madagascan rock,
Stern frames of living bronze now melted into flesh,
Weep with that weeping flock.

One dark-gray deep-scarr'd general of the imperial staff
Holds up his maim'd right hand;

The signal stills those woful sounds, the bearers halt;
Like marble men they stand.

Then spoke the general to the flock of Sisters meek,
Who walk'd in lowly guise:
'I told you my imperial master's strict command
(My master great and wise).

The cross he sent to honour good Sœur Rosalie
Was to be borne this day;
No glittering cross upon the spotless pall I see—
Why did you not obey?'

Through all that breathless stillness rose a deep clear voice
A woman spoke out then:
'We are forbidden by St. Vincent's holy rule
To take reward from men.

Not king nor noble may our Father set aside,
Nor question what he said;
Sœur Rosalie was never known to break the rule alive,
She keeps it now when dead.'

'You answer well, dear Sister; I have ever found
A soldier's loyal heart
Beneath that stainless helmet which you wear,—but I
Must also do my part,

And thus obey!' With that he cut the precious cross
From his own manly breast,
And laid it where, beneath her virgin pall,
Sœur Rosalie did rest.

Then boom'd the mighty cannon's sad and sullen roar,
Then toll'd the bourdon bell;
They lower'd out of sight the bier and shining cross
With prayer and requiem knell.

But many a day and year fresh garlands did they strew
Above Sœur Rosalie;
The gold may perish, but the name of 'Mother of the Poor'
Shall ever deathless be.

The incidents related in these two little poems are strictly true.

BOSHAM BELLS.*

ON Bosham Creek a priory stood,
The shaven turf was velvet green,
The monks, they say, were scant in prayer,
Though kindlier men were never seen;
And never church nor abbey fair
Could show eight bells like theirs, I ween.
Still peal the bells,
The merry bells,
Sweet silver bells!

When passers-by heard Bosham bells,
They stood entranced, both man and steed;
So silver sweet, so tuneful poised,
Like mighty Pan's melodious reed;
And when the deep old tenor rang,
'Twas heard on Littlehampton Mead.
Still peal the bells,
The merry bells,
Sweet silver bells!

* This legend is still told in the neighbourhood of Bosham, near Chichester, in whose remarkable little church Harold's daughter is said to be buried.

I would I had the art or tongue
That tenor bell in rhyme to paint;
Its lofty dome all wreathed with thorn,
Its Lamb of God and many a saint;
Its Tree of Heaven, with fruit thick hung,
Its lilies free from stain or taint.
Still peal the bells,
The merry bells,
Sweet silver bells!

And all around a ring of heads,
A guard of circling cherubim,
With wing enfolded, reverent eyes,
In woven front about the rim,
Still '*Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus!*' cried;
'Eternal glory be to Him!'
Then peal the bells,
The merry bells,
Sweet silver bells!

The priory own'd a lordly rule,
The monks lived soft and liked their ease;
As tramp'd their mules through glade and brake,
Their cheery songs aye swell'd the breeze;
At eventide they cast the bowls,
Or cluster'd round the fire like bees.

Then peal the bells,
The merry bells,
Sweet silver bells!

St. Nicholas was the patron saint
Of all those woods and meadows fair;
St. Nicholas in his western niche
Stood mitred, carven high in air;
St. Nicholas shone in ruby glass,
Mid angels' heads most quaint and rare.
Then peal the bells,
The merry bells,
Sweet silver bells!

But one fair Vigil of St. John,
A vision to the prior came;
St. Nicholas stood beside his couch,
And warn'd of sword and fiery flame,
Of priory burnt and altar wreck'd—
For God their pride would surely tame.
Then peal the bells,
The merry bells,
Sweet silver bells!

Yet still the brothers fish'd the pool,
The brown bowls troll'd the velvet lea;
Loud lusty catches pierced the glade,
Loud laughter rang along the sea;

And though the Dane now raged and burnt,
Still Bosham bells chimed merrily.
Still peal the bells,
The merry bells,
Sweet silver bells!

Woe worth their hour of waking dool!
Woe worth the shrieks and cries and yells!
When maim'd and blinded, stark and wan,
And fleeing from their burning cells,
The prior and sacristan alone
Still lived to toll the *Ave* bells.
Still peal the bells,
The merry bells,
Sweet silver bells!

Then burst the rabble up the tower,
They tear and cut the welted strands;
Down-crashing come the bells amain,
Where still that gray-hair'd prior stands.
His blood is sprinkled on the slab;
Prone lies he on his aged hands.
Then peal the bells,
The merry bells,
Sweet silver bells!

One noble bell still swung aloft,
Amid the wreck of strand and wood,

The tenor bell, all shining fair,
Like some tall rock mid drift and flood.
Still chimed at every lightest touch,
Still answer'd every changing mood.
Then peal the bells,
The merry bells,
Sweet silver bells!

Then raged that furious heathen band,
Yoked oxen swiftly to a car,
And knitting fast the bell with cords,
Scourged the poor oxen fast and far,
To where a burnish'd galley lay
Deep inland, shelter'd by the bar.
Then peal the bells,
The merry bells,
Sweet silver bells!

The galley swiftly glided on,
The Danes on board did loudly sing;
But as they near'd the open sea
Down through the deck, like living thing—
Down sank the bell through plank and keel,
And left one circling silver ring.
Then peal the bells,
The merry bells,
Sweet silver bells!

Long years went by, long years of change,
New monks rebuilt those ruin'd halls,
And chant and prayer went up to God
From thin bent figures in their stalls.
The new-cast bells were hung once more;
But seven, not eight, rang o'er the walls.
Then peal the bells,
The merry bells,
Sweet silver bells!

And when to ring the *Angelus*
The brothers flew with sandall'd feet,
The waking herdsmen rubb'd their eyes
To hear the lost old tenor sweet;
When seven bells rang vesper-time,
The buried tenor answer'd meet.
Then peal the bells,
The merry bells,
Sweet silver bells!

Those days are gone; the priory walls
Have dwindled to a ruin gray;
The prior and monks, the seven fair bells,
The very race have pass'd away;
Yet still the tenor bell is heard
From Bosham Creek thrice every day;

And thus it softly seems to sing:
'Glory to God and praise alway.'
Old tenor bell,
Sweet spirit bell,
Farewell, farewell!

MARGARET.

(*From the French of Marie Jenna.*)

'LADY MARGARET, at red sunrise,
God's fresh-born holy hour,
I saw thee bend thy thoughtful violet eyes
Upon the daisy flower,
When all the world lay dreaming, drown'd in sleep.
What said thy word of power?'
I whisper'd, 'Pearl of field,
All wordless in thy praise,
White star in emerald shield,
Thou spreadst thy golden rays;
But I can give my heart;
Be mine the better part.'

'O Lady Margaret, when you reclined
Beside the purling stream;

What image, pictured in thy limpid mind,'
Inform'd thy waking dream?'
I said, 'Bright ribbon, winding through the grass,
Singing thy joyous song,
The glancing sun-rays pass
Thy crystal waves among;
Paint bush and reed and flower,
Green willow, radiant fly;
But my more magic power,
Their meaning can espy.'

'O Lady, when yon bird with glancing flight,
Soaring above thy head,
Shook orange-scented chestnut petals white,
Like daisies on the mead,
What saidst thou, maid, to that glad wingèd thing?'
'O friend of men and flowers,
Spread wide thy burnish'd wing,
In sun and April showers
Thy cup unbitter'd drain,
Still griefless be thy lay;
But I my vernal strain
Shall chant through endless day.'

A REVERIE.

'BROAD, massive, high, and stretching far,
And held impregnable in war:'*
So runs the text, and thus in truth it stands,
'Tantallon vast,' upon the blood-red crag,
Spreading its rugged wings and time-pierced breast
Towards the eastern ocean and the winds.
Its broken towers are split, its eyeholes blank,
Its cunning wondrous structure emptied out,
Its secret strength and weaponage a show
For vulgar starers. Blinded Samson thus
Majestic stood, a game-stock and a wreck.
Go view it from the strand, all floor'd with slabs
Of ruddy rock, from which the soaring cliff
Springs mighty, piled in blocks by Titan hands,
Or upward heaved from depths of primal fire.
To see Tantallon thus—that Douglas hold†—
Will live within thy memory stamp'd for life!

* *Marmion*, canto v.

† Tantallon Castle, said to have been first built by Macduff, the stronghold of the Douglas.

For all below the warring waters rush
With giant waves upon the lasting rocks;
And curling over, break their opal arch
Into ten thousand glorious joyful songs,
Such as strong angels sing with trump and shawm:
'Thy way is in the sea, Thy paths are in
The waters, and Thy footsteps are not known.
The sea is His, He made it—praise the Lord!'
There, high in air, the snow-white gannet hangs;
Then soaring joyous on the rushing blast,
Swoops down and plunges headlong in the wave.
Thence, slowly climbing, gain the dizzy cliff,
Now crown'd with velvet turf about the towers,
And balanced on its marge, look round the bay,
Where sweep the varied rocks, gray, purple, green,
Each after each entrancing still the sight,
Till lost in distance and the boundless sky.
Then traverse with thine eye the doubtful strait
Toward the Bass, St. Baldred's hermit-home,
On which he dwelt a thousand years agone,
Yet leaves his name and memory engraved
Upon the stream of time. No massive hold,
Wide-spreading to the winds, he built or own'd,
No lands or lordships named. He went and came
Wherever hearts or souls stretch'd out to him,
Ordain'd his service as a shepherd-priest.

So mix'd he with that rude and lawless race,
Brawling and fishing, killing and wrecking there,
Till he gain'd hearing, and then won their hearts;
And the wild Lothians own'd the rule of Christ.
While thus upon a time I musing sat,
Methought I saw two ways diverging wide,
Outstretching towards one goal. One bright with fame,
Great deeds of loyal service, praise of men,
Brave battles, suit at court, wealth, joys, renown.
The next a stricter path; a lot unknown,
Uncared-for, lonely, uncaress'd, unpraised,
Where self and full-voiced life and all its joys
Are laid aside in waiting for that day
When hidden toilsome workmen shall be waged
As they have used their gold.
* * * * * And still the waves,
The solemn waves, went ebbing and flowing,
Flowing and ebbing, in exulting song:
'Thy way is in the sea, Thy paths are in
Great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.
Sing praises, yea, sing praises to our God!'

EURYDICE.*

THE world was in its May-day prime,
The woods were spread with lily-bells,
Hymettus hills were thick with thyme,
The nightingales in hawthorn dells
Sang thrilling floods of melody,
That shaped the word, it seem'd to me,
'Eurydice, Eurydice!'

Came Orpheus with his zither then,
Caused flowers to bloom and leaves to spring,
Narcissus, almond, cyclamen;
While still in widening circling ring,
The witching charming melody
Went whisp'ring round, it seem'd to me,
'Eurydice, Eurydice!'

She came, that blue-eyed, gold-hair'd bride,
She twined her arms about his neck;
She wept and 'plain'd, she wept and sigh'd,
Her tears like pearls her face did deck.
And while she held him, still did he
Throw round her wailing melody,
Still sang that word 'Eurydice!'

* Suggested by a drawing of Mr. Watts in the Academy of 1869.

'Go forth,' she cried, 'O Orpheus brave,
Go forth and win the fadeless wreath;
Mount upward from this dreary grave,
And let me flee this living death.
O, look not back, dear husband; see,
The rosy dawn is calling thee;
O, free thy bride, Eurydice!'

'I will, or die!' cried Orpheus brave,
And sprang with zither up the way,
Sprang manful over rock and wave,
While dawn grew on to brighter day.
Soon would the peak be won, and he
Then set his bride for ever free;
Eurydice! Eurydice!

And ever as he goes the sound
Of that sweet lute floats down the wind;
It seems to heal that parting's wound,
To cheer her heart, to lift her mind;
For still as farther, farther he,
Still sweeter floats that melody,
Still faintly calls 'Eurydice!'

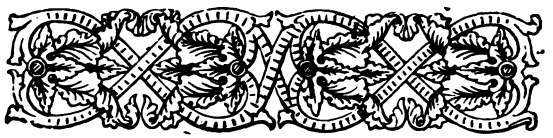
The peak is won, yes, won at last,
The sun shoots up above the tide;
Then Orpheus turns, one look to cast,
Upon his gold-hair'd, ransom'd bride.

O, lost is that high victory—
The sun is darken'd suddenly;
Woe, woe, to sweet Eurydice!

She cast her arms above her head,
    She utter'd one despairing wail,
As Orpheus, mad with grief, downsped
    To catch that form so marble pale;
He held her fast, he stoop'd to see
Those eyes that fix so tenderly.
Ah, me! poor lost Eurydice!

Poor love-lorn wretch, he holds her fast;
    Still white and whiter doth she fade;
Each trembling breath may be her last,
    No strength can raise her drooping head.
Poor earthly love, 'tis sad to see
How sweet it tastes, how bitterly
It hath undone Eurydice!

Too weak to wound her for her health,
    Too fond to leave her for long gain,
Too earthly-tender, squandering wealth,
    To save one obol's fee of pain.
O failing Orpheus, still I see
Thy story in love's misery,
Love's fate in lost Eurydice!



THE LEGEND OF NENAGH.

THE reddening August sun went slanting down
Toward the purple mountains, and the flush
Of evening pour'd upon the nodding wheat,
Which cover'd all the land with yellow sheaves.
Beside the brimming river stretch'd the meads
Where Nenagh's cattle pastured; for the land,
Time out of mind, was ruled by white-robed monks,
Who built St. Mary's Abbey, Nenagh's shrine.
Within the gray and mouldering cloisters' walls
Lived forty white-robed monks in strictest fast,
Who pray'd in silence, toil'd, and fed the poor.
But now an evil spirit swept the land,
Of ruin and unrest; and white-robed monks
And priests and abbey shrines were slain and spoil'd.
Like rolling clouds marauding bands swept on,
Had nearer come, and now this very day—
Assumption-eve—pour'd down on Nenagh's shrine.
'What, no monks here?' the brutal leader cried.

'The swine have fled to rob us of their gold—
The only thing that made them worth a groat!
Howbeit we'll fire their sty and burn their bones!'
Then rush'd the rabble rout against the gates,
And throng'd like cattle to the glorious church,
Sweeping tumultuous up the nave; then stood
Astound, for in the fretted choir there knelt
A ring of marble monks, thrice ten and nine,
All tranced in prayer, not heeding rout or din,
But rapt in sight of Him whose bonds they wore.
A moment's wild amaze, and then the wolves
Rush'd madly on the stirless praying flock,
And blood and mangled bodies strew'd the stones!

* * * * *

But when the August sun had slanted down
Still nearer to the mountains, and the moon
Had hung her pearly crescent o'er the wheat,
Which cover'd all the land with yellow sheaves,
Then Brother Maurus, fresh return'd from field
To Vespers, found his feet red-stain'd with blood,
And saw his brethren ghastly on the stones.
Poor Maurus! with a cry he fell all prone
Before the Virgin Mother, with her Son
Just taken from the cross; and weeping sore,
He 'plain'd him that the greatest of her feasts
Should lapse unhonour'd, all her psalms unsung.

'O Mother Mary, sweetest,' so he wail'd,
'How canst thou bear to see thy children dead
Around the altar on Assumption-eve?
That loveliest feast-day of the harvest-tide,
When young and old stream forth with grapes and corn,
And bring their freshest flowers to deck thy shrine.
Ah, Mother Mary, turn thy pleading eyes
Upon this ghastly slaughter! Can it be
Thou carest not—forgettest Nenagh's shrine?
Nay, sweetest Mother, never! Speak that word
Before the Throne, that word of good, just one!'
What more he would have urged was never known,
For in a moment all the sweet-voiced bells
Began to chime for Vespers; up and down,
The giddy round of ten great silver bells
Rang out triumphant through the evening calm.
And lo! the martyr'd abbot rist him up,
With mitre, cope, and alb; the cross was borne,
The incense flung, and two and two defiled
The white-robed brethren in accustom'd train;
But never yet so sweetly toned that chant,
In adjutorium meum—echo'd back
By counter-cry, 'O Lord, make haste to help!'
From all those ruby lips. And surging round,
Still louder roll'd that melody of joy;
For angel choirs and all that blessed throng

Who walk the golden pavement swell'd the strain.
And sang the rising of the stainless Maid—
Quasi aurora rutilans—to God!

* * * * *

Still on Assumption-eve, they tell us there,
That strain is faintly heard within the arch
Where the high altar stood, just when the sun
Goes slanting down towards the purple hills,
And reddens all the sheaves of yellow wheat,
Around the crumbling stones which mark the place
Of great St. Mary's Abbey, Nenagh's shrine.

This legend is beautifully told by the Spanish chronicler Henriquez, of the Seville Seminary. Nenagh, or de Maggio, was a Cistercian Abbey.

ANNA'S DREAM.

'CALL it not a poet's dream,'
Nor speak of rose-lipp'd girls with golden hair,
Nor let me wild and random seem,
While I my famous dream of dogs declare.

The dog I wish'd to make my own—
With longing covet of the true dog-greed—
Was never advertised nor shown,
And yet, believe me, is a dog indeed.

His colour, white as chalk or milk,
With steel-gray blotches like a Southdown flint,
His hair all wire, not fluff nor silk,
His dark-brown eyes like Scottish pebbles glint.

His tail, the queerest in the world,
A roll of hair tight twisted in a cone,
Yet with a jaunty fling is twirl'd,
As if to say my dog could hold his own.

And then his perky 'stick-up' ears—
This was the crowning glory of my dream—
The type of wishes, hopes, and fears,
And all the finest of dog-culture's cream.

'Twas thus my proto-dog I plann'd,
Then whelm'd in sleep upon my couch I lay,
When at th' unconscious brain's command
A crowd of dream-dogs rush'd in full array.

Pale mastiffs, spaniels thickly curl'd,
Pugs, poodles, Skyes, base 'toys,' and collies keen,
Maltese and lion dogs—the world
Seem'd gone to dogs, such crowds were never seen.

Newfoundlands, staghounds, bounded there,
Retrievers trooping brown, retrievers black,
They crowded in to fawn and stare—
The proto-dog he was not there, alack!

I saw him still within my brain,
His flint-like splotches, chalk-white hair;
I saw his tail—but all in vain,
His lovely 'stick-up' ears they were not there!

Ah, proto-dog—the vision fled,
Newfoundlands, mastiffs, pugs, went out in smoke.
Ah, dog of dreams—the tears I shed
So drown'd my pillow that with pain I woke.

My flint-like dog is still to seek—
I know he wanders somewhere on this earth—
To 'stick-up' ears I still feel soft and weak,
Though you, unfeeling, read my dream with mirth.

ON A HIDDEN SHRINE.*

MOTHER, deep in shadow hidden,
Thou standest with thy Child in arms,
Meek handmaid of the Lord, still bidden
To taste thy joy mid earth's alarms.
When angel-warn'd by vision of the night,
So didst thou hurry in Egyptian flight,
While deeper glooms wrapt all thy soul in mute affright,
Sweet 'Mother out of sight!'

About thee falls no gilded vest,
No stars bedeck thy gentle head,
Rich gifts around thee are not press'd,
For thee no flowery carpet spread.
So, Mother, didst thou stand one long-past night,
Unkiss'd, unwelcomed in thy mother-right,
And pleading still, still left without, unheeded quite,†
Sweet 'Mother out of sight!'

* The image of the Blessed Virgin which suggested these lines was given by Sir John Simeon.

† 'Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without,' &c.

When the long-hidden life was done
Whose sweetness man may never spell,
O Mother, none might hear the moan
With which thou badst thy Son farewell.
From out the lattice with grape clusters dight,
Following with streaming eyes thy soul's delight,
Thou still didst watch and listen through the fading night,
Lone 'Mother out of sight!'

Thou wast not bidden to the feast
When the last Paschal Lamb was slain;
No Bread was given thee to taste,
No Chalice strengthen'd thee for pain.
The words divine the Eleven shared that night,
The prayer which fills each new-born soul with light,
Were hid from thee, dear Mother, in thy woful plight,
Sad 'Mother out of sight!'

Standing all tearless by the Cross—
No hidden Mother then—
Thy boundless right to pain and loss
Made known to angels and to men;
Thou yet wast named not by thy Lord that night,
When Death and Hell were trampled in the fight,
And Heaven at His uprising sang with new delight,
Meek 'Mother out of sight!'

When smote thine ear those accents brief,
'Woman, behold thy son!' the sword
Pierced all thy soul with darkest grief,
Exchanging man for God's own Word.
Yet still unconquer'd in the silent fight,
For us the gift, for thee the sharp despite,
Thou didst in travail-throes then vanquish Satan's
might,
Great 'Mother out of sight!'

And even when to Olivet
He led His chosen band,
Sweet Mother, still thy eyes were wet,
Barr'd from the Promised Land;
Thou fain wouldst cling to Him with loving might,
Fain, fain wouldst stay with hands His upward flight,
Left on that lone hillside when fled thy life and light,
Still 'Mother out of sight!'

When he whose new-born joy in grace
First placed thee, lowly, in thy shrine,
He oft was here with buried face,
Heart-thankful for faith's gift divine;
For this, perchance, when thine own May shone bright,
His earthly bonds were loosed to instant flight,
And thou wast with Him, Mother, guiding through
death's night,
Then Mother full in sight!

Thus, Mother of the hidden shrine,
I love to bring thee prayers and tears,
All sad forsaken ones are thine,
All lonely hearts, all doubts and fears;
Thy sheltering love shall aid our unwatch'd fight,
Thy pleading voice shall cheer our starless night,
And when our evening time shall dawn to heavenly light,
Then, Mother bright,
Thou shalt be ever in our sight!

THE LADY AND THE ROSE.

(*Taken from the Italian of Maria Fabbroni.*)

SWEET rose, red rose of early May,
Whose crimson noon
Grew ripe too soon,
Woo'd by the sun's unshadow'd ray,

Why hangs thy head low-drooping down,
Why fades thy leaf
With hidden grief,
Thou queen of flowers with moss-twined crown?

O May-day queen on daisied lawn,
Thou royal dower
Of sun and shower,
Why droops thy head upon the thorn?

Fair lady, wouldst thou truly learn
Why blighting doom
Awaits my bloom,
Why freezes May to winter stern?

This day, unfolding fresh with joy,
Pearl-gemm'd with dew,
Rose-dress'd anew,
I made myself the west-wind's toy.

With gold-sprinkled vest and velvet rings
The butterfly came flitting by
To bruise my petals with his wings,

Came swarm of flies, of gnats, of bees,
On rifling bent,
Till worn and spent,
I felt that life was on its lees.

Now honey sweet and bloom all gone,
Life ebbing fast,
I know at last
The glory of the life just flown.

Then, lady, learn, ere thy day close,
To watch thy heart,
To live apart,
And let the thorn-hedge guard the rose.

Read right this lesson in thy May,
O precious maid;
Seek Heaven's aid,
So thou shalt bloom in endless day,
Thou maiden-rose, sweet rose of May!

PLEA FOR A CAPTIVE BIRD.

(*From the French of Marie Jenna.*)

YES, he is captive: grasp'd within thy hand,
His feather'd sheen and liquid song lie bound.
The glade that echo'd all this day his song,
To-morrow mute and empty may be found.
Yet, brother, shall he die?

His slender strength must yield to thine, I know;
Still pity pleads for one so glad and bright;
'Tis sweet to live among the flowery thorns,
Singing from fragrant morn till dew-sprent night.
Dear brother, let him fly!

O, think what joy it is to breast the air,
To cut the ethereal blue, now high, now low,
Now here, now there, spanning the trackless waste,
Like some swift-shooting bark with leaping prow.
Ah, let him fly!

Now circling high in wheels with quivering wing,
And then down-dropping to the wave-tost main;
Not knowing if the toll of yonder bell
Comes down from heaven or mounts from wooded plain.
He must not die!

No, let him sweep by tower and spire-clad height,
By flowery grove bee-rifled, purling stream,
Breathing with each swift wing-beat fragrant air
From blooms of earth and heaven's bright sunny beam.
Yes, let him fly!

Let him still drink bright raindrops from the rose,
From the bent quivering reed still joyous spring;
Be counted as some precious unspoilt gem,
Of all the world of life the crowning thing.
He must not die!

Then loose him, brother; loose that feather'd joy,
Open thy hand, and let him swift rush through;
Speed up with piercing trill and seek his home,
To tell his nurselings the good news and true.
Ah, see him fly!

Then pour'd that lay so sweet, so clear, it's joy
Smote yonder workman bending o'er his wood,
Smote into breathless listening where he stood.
'Our God is good,' it rings; 'He makes us glad;
And man, His image, like his God, is good,
And sets us free!'

WITH THE BLUEBELLS.

'TWAS springtide, and the fragrance of the larch
Swept through the air like incense; by the ways
Hung downy beech-leaves, soft and golden green,
And hawthorn-buds, just bursting, lay like snow
On all the vivid leafage of that May.
Flitting through copse and dell and tangled brake,
The cuckoo's voice came chanting; as one weaves
A pattern on the web, so, shuttle-wise,
He traced his weft of music on the air;
While down in yonder hawthorn-grove rich waves
Poured up—rich waves of hurrying, bursting song,
Where nightingales acclaim'd the birth of May.
Yet though all earth and air were glad, my heart
Refused to share their joy; a leaden weight
Of sordid cares had crush'd its inward spring
And brought it to a stand. At once I cried:
'I will go forth and see the bluebells—learn
Of their "sweet lives" content—and bow my head

To past and future cares. Then up, faint heart!'
Along the lanes, with strawberry-blossoms gemm'd,
With myriad eyes of speedwell and white stars,
I took my way, to where the hillside copse,
Just freshly cut in part, and part left rank,
Lay now in flood of sunlight, now in shade.
But O, that flood of sunlight! There a sheet
Of smalted sapphire lay along the slopes,
Most like some wave of bloom; the soft wind stirr'd
The troop of bells, and sway'd them to and fro,
And shook sweet music from them; then a wave
Of purple shade flow'd through them, and they stay'd.
Above, the gold of fresh-unfolded oak
Shed glory on the rose-streak'd lake of blue.
Ah, tender bluebells, darlings of the spring,
I bless'd you as I gazed! Old visions came
Like crowding bees about my heart; old strains
Of buried music, voices from my life
Long perish'd, floated in the air again
And brought back vanish'd faces, vivid still.
Ah, tender bluebells, fragile as those lives,
Ye spoke too keenly to my heart of love
Undying for my faithless mood to last!
It fell away like scales, and kindly tears
Came dropping down soft rain. Shall these frail
blooms

Be spread in thousands over copse and dell,
Be raised from icy death and snow-clad mould
In beauty passing words; shall God so clothe
Grass of the field with more than royal show,
To prank its hour and fade; and shall a soul
In His own image made perish or fail—
Dwindle without His loving care and thought?
O thou of little faith! I look'd again
And yet again at all those wild-wood flowers,
Pondering their beauty with a thankful joy;
Then went my way in stronger, wiser mood.

HYACINTHUS.

HYACINTHUS! Hyacinthus!
When sighing west-winds stir the earth,
When snow-flower white and crocus flame
Spring from their ancient flame of dark-brown mold,
I joy to scan the wondrous birth
Which links the springtime with thy name,
And flings fresh fragrance round that tale long-told
Of 'Ai! Ai! Hyacinthus slain!'

Hyacinthus! Hyacinthus!
I daily watch the shapeless root,
All leafless, formless, flowerless still,
Wave its scant fibres in the narrow glass;
Within me then deep stirrings moot,
Long years instinct with drama pass,
The sun-god strikes, the wailing maidens shrill
Cry, 'Ai! Ai! Hyacinthus slain!'

Hyacinthus! Hyacinthus!
O'erweening love and jealous strife
Closed thy blue eyes in lasting sleep;
Thy gold head bow'd like corn in harvest-time,

All sudden paled thy joyous life:
The sun-god, maiden, could not weep,
While flower-bells in the west wind seem'd to chime
Soft 'Ai! Ai! Hyacinthus slain!'

Hyacinthus! Hyacinthus!
Red lay the life-blood of the boy,
A stain upon the springing green,
When it in gather'd up in ruby bells,
Which slowly swung and toss'd with joy,
While low the wailing died in thymy dells
Of 'Ai! Ai! Hyacinthus slain!'

Hyacinthus! Hyacinthus!
Thus I rede that tale long-told,
From earth-bred longing death is born,
Great Death that holds Life in his hand;
And when that husk of death is planted deep,
It ripens, as from night fresh morn,
And blooms as by enchanter's hand;
So Life still swallows Death, and while we weep
Our 'Ai! Ai! Hyacinthus slain!'
We find him, glorious, in new life again.

TO L. S.

COME forth! The 'argent-lidded' morn
Steals o'er the dusky pearl-gray sky;
And by and by
The half-blown rosebuds and the winds just born
Will fill the air with sweets that live and die.

Come forth! The sun is rising up
Like some glad giant from the sea.
O, come with me,
And pluck the swaying water-lily's cup
From out its broad-leaf'd barque of mystery.

Ah, lady, come, put off thy sleep,
Put off awhile thy cares and fears,
Forbid thy tears,
And in these matins bright thy spirit steep,
And with this summer-flush renew thy years.

For God is in this summer joy,
So surely as in storm and shower,

And in His hour
Will bid thee break from grief and life's annoy,
And walk in strength, rejoicing by His power.

Then, lady, come; I bid thee rise,
And play thy part with manful sway;
Rise up, I pray;
So shalt thou mount the far-off vernal skies,
And hail the summer of eternal day.

COMPLINE.

DOWN drops the red sun in the burnish'd sea,
Down in rejoicing might,
Into the trembling deep;
And while his hot rim slowly vanisheth,
As if all drown'd in sleep,
Soft swaying o'er the fragrant lea,
The *Ave* chime forewarns the night,
And every care and labour banisheth.
Ave Maria,
So it saith.

Slowly the red herd follows in a line,
The sheep-bell fainter falls,
The corncrake's wooden note
Creaks through the green ears, rustling, waving slowly,
Like floating, wind-tost boat;
Then hallowing the day's decline,
Christ's coming thrice the bell recalls,
And bids us hail the maiden great and lowly.
Ave Maria,
Mother holy!

As sheaves of lilies lift their stately heads
Beside an alley green,
In queen-like, stainless pride,
So the great multitude thy fair head crowneth,
The golden throne beside;
Yet violet in the fresh spring meads
Was never meeker, lowlier seen,
Whom in the smiling rain the April drowneth.
Ave Maria,
Gabriel saith.

Thou art the 'mighty Mother' of the Greeks;
Thy womb the earth enfolds,
Thy flesh the germ of life;
Thou from the mind of God Athenè leaping,
Arm'd for the deathless strife;
Thou art Demeter, when she seeks
Her child among the doomful holds;
Mother of harvests, sheaves of souls still reaping!
Ave Maria,
Joying, weeping!

Then dreamt they thee, O bright and moon-crown'd maid,
As huntress of the wild,
Chastiser of the proud;

Thy light from all base earthly churls concealing,
The false-tongued, loose-lifed crowd;
But in the fresh and hidden shade,
To hearts still undefiled,
Thy heavenly moon-bright face revealing.
Ave Maria,
Name of healing!

Thou art the Mother of the fallen in fight;
Where their dead bodies lie,
Thou keepest watch and ward,
Spreading the sackcloth, scaring the birds of prey,
In sleepless, loving guard;
True Rispah, mother Israelite,
Thou seest the years go by,
Unfading still, unknowing of decay.
Ave Maria,
Maid alway!

Thou, too, the Mother of earth's sad and reft,
Widow'd and childless maid!
Thou by the Cross must stand;
E'en, when thy risen Lord to heaven ascending,
Not placed at His right hand;
But on the wild hillside still left,
Thy rest for years delay'd,

Still all thy bread with tears of longing blending.
Ave Maria,
Love unending!

Then, when the red sun quenches in the wave,
And all the earth lies still,
Let us kneel down and pray,
Lifting our praying hands and thankful voices:
'Mother, be thou our stay;
Strength we must plead for, love we crave,
Light for our warp'd and darken'd will,
Until our soul, full ripe, in heaven rejoices.'
Ave Maria,
Hear our voices,
Mother-maid!

WITH THE RED LEAVES.

THE year was dying, flush'd with hectic hues,
And all the western sky was flame of gold,
With purple interchange, beside fresh lakes
Of purest turquoise fading into green.
The crested headlands, clad with russet oaks,
Red beech, and golden-dropping elm and birch,
Lay bathed in filmy light, as we two sped
To scent the fragrance of the dying woods.
We two; the child and mistress of the house,
Whom I have watch'd a puling babe, pale elf,
And boyish playfellow; but thence shot up
To all the gracefulness of girlhood's spring;
Now child and friend and comrade all in one.
Our way was through a holly-border'd lane,
All hung with scarlet fruitage, spindle-pods,
And 'travellers' joy;' below, a mat of fern;
Thence upward to the firwood, thickly strew'd
With spines, a noiseless track, whence, spiring high,

The furrow'd bronze-limb'd pines spread dark above,
And swept their harps with mingled ruth and joy.
No word we spoke; we felt, that child and I,
A kindred need of silence. What avail'd
Our foolish talk when all around was speech?
Speech of those royal psalms which sing of God
Among the goodly cedar-trees and firs,
On mountains hoary and in rushing wind,
When all creation, with its bated breath,
Stands mute to hear His word: 'Be still, and know
That I am God.' So paced we through the wood;
But when we reach'd its bound, and gain'd the hill,
The limit of our strength, that silence broke
Into a cry of glad surprise. For, far
Below our feet, the tinted world lay broad
And richly fertile, folding gradual back
Towards the purple hills and velvet downs,
Towards the wooded weald and wide sea-marge,
Studded with spire and hamlet, park and grange,
With herdsmen's cots and homesteads, stacks and barns,
And all the appanage of rural toil.
Beside each hearth were gather'd hearts that loved,
That 'plain'd and suffer'd; weaving dark or bright
Their web of life, their warp of silk or wool;
Drinking their cup of failure or of joy;
Waging their fight of victory or dark death.

Below us lay—all steep'd in golden sheen,
Bestreak'd with rose and purples—mysteries
Beyond all power of speech, or written word,
Or poet's heart to feel, or time to solve.
Confessing this, we reverently gazed
On all that silent epic, saying once,
And once again: 'Be still, for I am God.'

A TALE OF MENTONE.

'BROTHER, I beg my boon: my turn to-day!
Let us go up the mountain steep and lone—
You know it well—where the old convent crowns
The piny height with cypress and white walls;
Th' Annunziata is its pretty name.
There the great tanks are hollow'd, and their rims
Are fringed with ferns and ceterach. Green frogs
Look out from those smooth depths with jewell'd eyes,
All night they croak and caw, like rooks in spring,
And we can capture some and make them tame.
Give up your fishing, brother; let us go!'
So spoke the younger-born; his brother smiled,
And yielded, as he ever did, to Hugh,
Gave up his sardine-fishing, and he sought
Their tutor to go with them on the quest.
The tutor left his books with secret pain;
He felt no mind for emerald-coated frogs,
Nor much he loved those slimy treach'rous tanks,

Where men might slip and drown, and make no sign;
Yet yielding, started with this laughing word:
'What shall we do if Hugh should tumble in?
He goes for frogs—the frogs may fish for him!'
So, laughing, gibing, springing up the path,
The twain and their loved master sped their way,
And clomb the rocks, and near'd the convent walls.
But who could ever paint in words the scene
Which burst before them? Falling on each hand,
The rocky slabs slid down in cataracts
Of dark-gray stone, which scratch'd and rifted lay,
With marks of fire and ice of elder worlds.
Between those aged ribs and skeletons—
Grown old before the race of primal man—
Sprang tufted lavender, and rosemary
Hoar-flower'd, and that fragrant white-bell'd heath
Which wafts sweet breath of fresh-mown rain-wet grass.
Thus fell the precipices, herb'd and flower'd,
Down, down to dizzy depths, and then the stream
Rush'd foaming through its bed of whiten'd stones.
Far on the other side the mountains rose,
With awful face all bleach'd and scarr'd: that one
The Berceau, then Belinda, and that last
Grim, far-off craggy peak, Gran Mondo named.
Then turn to where yon wealth of fruited groves
Slopes golden, olive-mingled, to the bay.

Here spread no barren wastes, no rifted crags;
But like those fabled gardens of old time,
The golden rounds hang weighting down their boughs,
And fruits and blossoms scent the reeling air.
Yet cast thine eye beyond, and still beyond,
For that blue hemicircle seems to swell
And heave toward the heavens, till the mind
Cries out that these are visions which must fade.
The tutor look'd abroad, and lifted up
His heart in praise, but Ralph and little Hugh
Were rapt in other ecstasies and joys,
Of fronds and hard-ferns, and those grass-green frogs.
And soon they shouted: 'Come and help us, sir!
We cannot reach him where he crumpled lies.
O, come and help us!' And the tutor went;
But as he climb'd upon the slimy marge,
O'erreach'd himself, and slipp'd and tumbled in.
Loud shriek'd the boys: 'O master, master dear!'
No master could they see; his head had struck
The sharp-cut edge, and like a stone he sank.
Like one distraught with grief and panic-fear,
Ralph sprang upon the moss-grown wall, and strove
With arm and staff to reach the body prone;
Then rashly leaning o'er, with streaming eyes,
He too o'erreach'd his balance and fell in,
But clutch'd at little Hugh, and kept his head

Above the sullen pool. Poor little Hugh
Uplifted then his childish voice in shouts
And piercing cries for aid: 'O, help us—help!
My brother drowns! O, olive-pickers, help!
My brother drowns!' But all in vain, in vain
His shrill cry rang along the rocks and groves,
For 'twas Ascension-day, and all the hinds
Had left their olive-sacks and lemon-heaps
To go to Vespers. 'Hark! St. Michel's bell!
Hush, dearest Hugh,' the elder brother gasp'd;
'They will not hear; it is Ascension-day;
I hear the vesper-bell. God wills it so;
Yet hold me up, for I have much to say.
You'll tell our little Mildred she must love
Our mother for herself and me. Obey
And love and learn, and work with all her might,
And pray for me—old Ralph. O, hold me up—
My arm is tired! You'll tell our mother, dear,
That I have loved her more than all the world;
And though I die because God wills it so,
I would have lived to help and be her joy.
But bid her not to grieve, for up in heav'n
I still shall help her, love her, more than now.
O, must you let me go? Dear little Hugh—
Nay, do not sob so!—say your prayers each day,
And learn your lessons, and be good to Wasp;

This is for my sake—your old brother Ralph!
One minute more. Good-bye, Old Castellar,
And Cap St. Martin, where so oft we've play'd
Among the rocks and pines. The bell again!
Our Lord is there; I soon shall see His face.
O Lord, be good to me! There—kiss me now,
For I can hold no longer. Hughie boy,
Kiss mother for me, dear—let go—good-bye!'
The little hand gave way, the fair face smiled,
And sank in that green sullen pool of death;
But the brave heart will never be forgot
By those who climb Mentone's rocky hills.*

* This sad incident really happened two or three years since at Mentone. The tutor's grave is in the beautiful cemetery within the walls of the old Saracen castle which crowns the town. The child was brought to England.

A BALLOON LETTER.

(*An exact translation from the letter of a Breton Moblot.*)

SWEET mother, father, little sister dear,
While waiting for the Curfew's brazen tongue,
I take my pen to write once more my love,
And yet again my love, for all at home.
How can I say how dearly, sadly now
That home comes back? For though my hope lives green,
And all my heart is fix'd to keep my oath,
My country to redeem, for France to die,—
Still in the night swims back that pictured home;
The long low kitchen with its glittering ware,
Your table, mother, and the amber foam
Of our old perry creaming in bright cups!

* * * * *

I see my father with his silver hair,
Thinking of me, poor soldier, supperless,
And making o'er the loaf the holy sign.
I will not think of it! Courage!—I shall return.

So here we are, then, under old gray Bicêtre,
With our dear Count and all our Breton friends—
And here am I, all safe and sound, to steal
A word with home, paper and ink on knee,
And candle flaring, guttering in the wind.
This old Bicêtre, with frowning rugged walls,
Is mann'd with Breton seamen, rough and rude,
All sleeping by their guns, as if on deck
They mann'd their ship and swept their wave-wash'd
coast,
Round by Saint Malo (which you know is near at hand),
To our own dear Saint Servan—so I find
Many a good comrade dwelling by that sea,
And pledge them, too, in cups of Paris wine.
I am glad to tell you, father, that our troop
Was in the midst of all that last affray,
And the old ringer's son—you know him?—Noel,
Died on the field, as we say here, of honour.
A splinter struck him in the thigh—'twas sad
To see him bleed and hear him moan and cry;
My heart leapt to my throat, but our old Count
And all the staff were glad, and praised him well.
All that *I* did was to fire and fire again
Into the blinding smoke, still pressing forward
As the word was given, but seeing nothing there.
And so till evening, when the word was given

To beat a retreat and fall back on the tents.
Then an old officer—at least I saw his cap
Was bound with gold—came twisting his moustache,
Swearing in heathen fashion in gruff voice:
'Now to dinner, children—you have fought well!'
In spite of voice and eye and oaths we cried:
'God save the Republic!' 'Tis our watchword now!
There are some among us, though, who sternly frown
When our old Abbé—with his gown tuck'd up,
Marching with us through smoke and thrilling balls,
And, kneeling by the wounded, speaks of God
And our dear Breton home—is jested at;
But we revenge ourselves for their poor wit,
By showing how religion sweetens death.

* * * * *

We march'd across all Paris, silent, sad—
Where men and women, struck with one amaze,
Stood reading telegrams in twos and threes,
But welcomed us most kindly to their homes.
Pierre and I are together at a shop
Where business is at standstill, and I felt
At first not wanted, and sat awkwardly,
Just balanced, on my chair! For two more mouths
Were not just then a godsend; but ere long
The children made us all good friends; they laugh'd,
They romp'd, they stole our belts and caps and arms,

And with their joyous clatter drown'd the noise
Our boots and rifles made upon the stairs.
In short, we left them with regret of both,
And now still see them when our guard is done.
There! I must finish, for the trumpet sounds
With brazen throat. If you receive this scrawl,
You will be glad with me of our good school;
For thanks to its teaching I am corporal,
And wear my ribbon bravely on my breast,
And write you loving letters by balloon!
Dear father, mother, I must say farewell
Till I shall see you, as I hope, again;
If not, remember, father, mother dear,
I die defending France, our bleeding France!
And, darling sister, when you meet Yvonne
Beside the fountain, tell her that my love
Is still the same; in Paris, vain and bright,
My heart is loyal, faithful to my love!
And when you kiss and stroke her long fair hair,
Whisper still softly in her ear my fears
Of the tall partner whom she dances with,
And pray her shun him, wait, and keep the house;
For when I come I hope to find her calm and bright.
Farewell! farewell! My last words are for you
My parents—and these tears from your poor son!

LEAF-SHADOWS.

(*In assonance.*)

THE meadow-grass was gold with buttercups,
And thick with feather'd sheaths and clover-buds;
Wind-toss'd, great daffodils all dewy swung
Their golden frills; and in the wood, green tufts
Of folded fern stood pack'd like fairy lutes,
While wind-flowers shimmer'd in the shimmering sun.

All down the wood-walk then I wander'd soft,
The mossy wood-walk that I know of old;
Above my head the beech-boughs trembling moved,
The beech-bough shadows, trembling, moved below;
And as I watch'd them, years long vanish'd rose,
I roam'd a gladsome child at home once more.

'Twas here we met, full field, in laurel glade,
Where diamond icelets hung from every spray;
'Twas here the oxlip and the primrose pale
First stole our senses with their perfume faint;
Here nightingales at midnight woo'd their mates,
Here first I learnt June shadow-leaves to watch,

Here with my father walk'd; while his brown eye
Grew bright as I unravell'd all his mind,
Putting out strength to meet him, as a squire
First bends his lance against a war-tried knight;
And when I touch'd his shield, his rare-won smile
Was guerdon richer than green crowns of pine.

Here would my mother pace with velvet tread—
I check'd my fiery march to mate her step—
What time her wiling talk, most changeful, sweet,
Would fill whole hours, nor knew we how they went,
So lovely, loving, was she—cultured, free,
Soul-soaring, but in wifehood ever meek.

With brothers, sisters, here in various mood,
I chased the fleeting tints of growing thought,
Which trace the changing pattern, warp and woof,
That life-lore weaves with silk or ebon wools;
Striving to lift the veil of years to come,
And shaping aye some soaring, sunbright lot.

The evening and the morning still are day,
Though years are past of toil and waste and pain;
The web of life, silk-broider'd, jewell'd rare,
Is faded, smirch'd with dust, and parcel-fray'd;
And where the trembling shadow-leaves still dance,
They flicker, ghost-like, over seven graves!

This thought swift plucks me back to actual life,
For toward its trickling source my soul had slipp'd;
'O shadow-leaves,' I said, 'ye still abide,
While hearts with wealth untold, like freighted ships,
Lie sunk five fathoms! Lord, Thy loving light
Must guide us through this darkness black as ink.'

Those whom we utmost need the soonest flee;
Earth's strength and love undying make an end;
The roof-tree shatters like a river-reed,
The shadow waving on the moss is left.
O shadow-leaves, your beauty makes me weep;
Ye dance unchanged, while love and life are dreams.

'IN MEMORIAM.'

I.

THE summer moon shone broadly on the street,
And parting guests were flowing from the door;
'Farewell!' 'Good-night!' and 'Till we meet again!'
Flew through the moonlit air to left and right,
Then sudden ceased. The host, still standing there,
Drinking the subtle fragrance from the parks,
Like one who keenly felt and loved the scent
Of dewy lawns, pleach'd alleys, and thick woods,
Turn'd with his winning graceful courtesy:
'Come to our island home,' he said, 'and see us there.'
And I, as if impell'd, swift answer'd back,
'I will! When roses bloom I shall be there!'
And as I went, I saw him standing still,
With all the beaming moonlight on his head,
Turning its silken showers to filmy gold.
The summer wax'd and ripen'd: long June days,
Showers of roses, reddening fruits, thick sheaves
Of creamy lilies; then the down-cheek'd peach,
Rich wine-red grapes, ripe nuts and mulberries,
And yet a little time of musky gourds,
Striped melons, medlars scented with decay,—
And so the year pass'd dying, and was gone.

II.

And then there came another rosy June,
A month of cloudless days and moonbright nights,
All stirr'd with one deep throb of sharpest pain;
And a loved sad voice cried: 'Come to us now!
Come to us quickly in our island home!'

* * * * *

It was a day of breathless deep delight,
The sky rose solemn like a dome; the sea
Wrinkled its azure brows in rippling curves,
Heaving its diamond sheen upon the shore
Without a wave. The bowery island rose
Above the waters like some fairy land,
That witching spells had laid in dreamless sleep,
And all its beauty stabb'd with deeper pain;
For while the way seem'd ever lengthening out,
I follow'd still a presence beckoning on,
Awaking ever keener sense of loss.
All down the wooded valley, thick with limes,
Bee-murmuring, steeping the soft sunny air
In luscious fragrance, till the senses stole
Ascendence, and both mind and memory slept.
In all the gardens roses flush'd in piles;
They hung their cluster'd heads, they clomb the doors,
They clothed the walls with hangings white and red;
On all the shimmering pools the lilies sat

In floating leaf-barques, waiting silently;
And o'er the velvet turf the mighty pines,
Befleck'd with sunlights, scatter'd odours rich,
As if embalming one remembrance dear,
As wafting incense o'er one sodded grave.
For all was full of him; straight alley green,
Wild woodland, glassy pool, and velvet down.
The ear, expectant, craved his ringing voice;
The eye, awaken'd, sought his golden head;
The heart, enfolding every well-known face
That made the circle of his hearth and board,
Felt icebound, gathering round that lasting blank
Which life can never fill. * *
* * * * A silence hung
Upon the time-worn grange; its joy was hush'd;
Upon the stairs ancestral faces pale
Seem'd to be brooding still the self-same thought
That fill'd my heart: 'We phantoms still remain,
While love and strength have vanish'd like a dream.'
And through the pleasant rooms and sunlit halls,
Through all the winding ghost-like passages,
By day, by night, in twilight or broad noon,
I sought that presence that inform'd them all,
That voice that mock'd me yet with thrill of joy,
Haunting the summer air. Never again,
Never again to ring in that dear home!

III.

We are not heathen; we have faith and hope
That those who leave us gather up their sheaves
And bear them where the golden grain is stored,
And enter into lasting joys with God.
We know they mingle with the white-robed throng,
And bring us good, and share our joy and grief,
Though ever looking to the life eterne.
We know, heart-gladden'd, that their pain is done,
And change and doubt and unregardful friends.
We may not grudge them, but, O loving God,
We cannot wear a mask and say, ''Tis well—
We are resign'd; 'tis best—we'd have it so;'
When all our flesh and senses ache with loss,
When hourly the mind falls on its own sword,
And the lone heart, bleeding, faints and dies.
We can but stretch out feeble praying hands,
And say: 'O, Thou Who once didst touch the bier
For sake of one poor widow's tears, forgive
If we our dead unraised bear weeping on;
Though weeping still we patient wait the end.'

THE CHESTNUT-TREE.

THIS autumn, as I pensive stroll'd
With one fair girl and friend,
We mark'd the leafage brown and gold,
And mourn'd the good year's end.

'O yellow leaves,' the girl did cry,
'I watch'd your crinkled green!
O golden leaves, why will ye die?
I mourn your summer sheen!'

Then bending down the faded bough,
I mark'd the dark-brown sheath,
With gum bevarnish'd o'er and through,
Enfolding leaves beneath.

Thus, e'en before the leaves lay low,
Fresh leafage was in store;
The life that yielded to Death's blow
Wrought life for evermore.

'Mourn not, dear child,' I said, 'the fall
Of spring to autumn gray;
For death itself shall be life's thrall,
Life spring from life's decay.'

'RACHEL PLORANS.'

TWO children in the woods at play,
Two children fishing in the stream,
Two strands aye twisting day by day,
Make life one hopeful, golden dream.

Two children toss'd the meadow hay,
Both rake and fork they joyous plied;
The gold-hair'd girl like fairy-queen,
The boy her bright-eyed king beside.

In turn they rode their Snowball white,
With graceful ease and eager pride;
Each day they cried with child's delight,
'Come see us when so fast we ride!'

Upon the turf they prank like fays,
Light-flitting hither, thither go.
Ah, happy children's summer days,
No cloud, no sorrow do ye know!

The boy unfolded like a flower,
In thought, in wit, in winning grace;
His mind, still ripening hour by hour,
Beam'd brightly, sweetly in his face.

Fair open brow, brave generous heart,
All noble, candid, true, and pure,
He own'd no wile, he knew no art,
His slightest word as diamond sure.

Like coursing wine his gentle blood
Sprang crimson-flushing when he spoke,
And constant he to trust, withstood
Whate'er could tempt a promise broke.

True knightly honour in that boy
Bloom'd radiant in those brief ten years;
Ten years of chequer'd, trembling joy,
Hemm'd in on either side by tears.

Those years are past; the woods are fair,
The fish leap joyous in the stream;
One gold-hair'd child plays lonely there,
The past is like a flitting dream.

Long waking hours throughout the night
I dream it o'er and o'er again;
In heaven I know are rest and light,
But O this earth of aching pain!

ONCE.

THEIR hutch was built upon a velvet lawn,
Those rabbits own'd a lordly hall;
And bounding o'er the turf like red-deer fawn,
Their master gave a ringing call.

We stole and sat within the near alcove,
The rabbits scuttling in and out;
While Punch, with ears erect at every move,
Watch'd how that puzzle came about.

Then softly crouching, with each hair a wire
And eager cry, he forward springs,
His yellow paws outstretch'd, his eyes on fire.
Those rabbits surely must have wings!

Pun's wise, dear face, so full of blank amaze,
He turn'd toward us for help in vain;
He whined and scratch'd, and bit the solid stays;
To disappointment still was fain.

With sudden wile and warlike wisdom fired,
As Household troops should meetly dare,
Sweep* solemn march'd upon the fortress wired,
As who should say, 'Fòes all, beware!'

He lean'd his lordly head to left, to right;
This riddle guardsmen sure should rede;
Then squeezed his sable bulk, to our delight,
Behind the hutch while rabbits feed.

Emerging, still all bootless, at the side—
'Twas good to see the dog's amaze—
He prick'd his ears with large eyes open'd wide,
While Bunny with a carrot plays.

'Twas good to mark the dogs, but better far
To watch that boy's transporting glee;
No present clouds that sunny hour can mar,
Nor steal its loving joy from me.

* A Newfoundland dog who had belonged to a nobleman in the Life Guards.

'IF IT BE THOU?'

'IF it be Thou?' In darkling hour
My soul doth faint and fail;
The storm must spend its power,
The wind its wail.
My frail steps falter on the surging wave.
Ten years Thy gift of wedded life,
Of love and home ten years—
Ah, tender-cherish'd wife
Through joy and tears!—
Then buried love and joy in one deep grave.

'If it be Thou?' When out that grave
Sprang fresh and sweet my flower,
And what was taken gave
Green sign of power.
Then heal'd my heart's deep wound new day by day;
I watch'd my graceful eager boy,
O'er book or pencil leant,
Or bounding with child's joy
O'er heath and bent;
While bloom'd rich promise of a lifelong stay.

'If it be Thou?' In sudden gloom
Was quench'd my little light.
Was he the heir of doom
Or heaven's delight?
I knew not, nor could scan Thee in that storm.
Ten years did that sweet life unfold
Its germs of wondrous grace,
Then, like a brief tale told,
I miss'd his face;
And in the gloom lost too Thy Sacred Form.

'If it be Thou?' Can mother's cry
Be vainly raised to deafen'd ear?
Canst Thou such misery
Refuse to hear?
Must I still falsely cry to Thee, ''Tis well'?
I ask Thee not to give again,
Hold not Thy Sacred Feet,
But with true mother's 'plain
And silence meet,
I would but fly to Thee my woe to tell.

Thou bidst me come! Ah, once again
I grasp Thy blessed hand in mine;
I hear the soft low strain
Of voice Divine,

And tread the surge anew like marble floor!
No spirit dread, but God my Lord,
My hand is lock'd in Thine;
'Tis Thou, and at Thy word,
O Love Divine,
I follow Thee in storm and calm to heaven's high door.

A PHOTOGRAPH AFTER DEATH.

I READ softly, though you will not wake him now;
He looks asleep, but sleep till doom will last;
Come near and rede this angel-vision pale,
The blue-vein'd lids and brow
In alabaster cast,
The golden curls like sunny rays that burst through misty veil.
Ye will not wake him, his ten years are sped;
His life has bloom'd to its most radiant hour;
His reason ripen'd for the Feast Divine,
When He who waked the dead
Removed His fragrant flower
To where, about the crystal sea, His fairest blossoms shine.

Pale winter snowdrops, pensile-drooping, lie
In hands transparent, white and fair as they;
White buds, green leaves, the fragile form enfold,
Aye hidden by and by
In sleep till Judgment-day.
While I without him pine and watch till empty life grows old.
I turn from thy dear image, flower-wreathed,
To walk through life's dull round and weary task;
I wander, weeping, on the darksome road;
The sword of Death seems sheathed,
And now I only ask
To know thee happy, watching o'er thy mother, safe with God.

A LEGEND OF CANNES.

TWO islands floating on the glassy wave,
Two islands anchor'd in the golden haze,
Two islands—twins—just sever'd by a band
Of crystal sapphire, like a peacock's neck;
Or liker to the heart of hyacinths
Fresh blown in woods—a rose-streak'd blue.
That long green island anchor'd next the shore,
'Sainte Marguérite,' was once the home of nuns,
Ruled by Sainte Marguérite; a happy troop
Of simple maids, to prayer and labour train'd.
But still a burden to their mother fair,
Who toil'd and moil'd, while still her mind was tost;
And rose at night and pray'd, and ofttimes wept,
Then waking, cried aloud, 'O Honorat!
Dear Honorat the good, O come to me!'
That farther island, floating in the haze,
Was till'd to one fair garden by a monk,
Who wrought and pray'd in silence; for he loved
His loneliness and toiling sever'd life,
And golden hours of rapt sweet speech with God.

He only spoke when Marguérite's great cry—
She was his sister—wrought him cross the sea,
The crystal bond between those islets green,
To shrive that sisterhood of child-like souls,
And comfort Marguérite in her troubled rule,
And bid her live in peace and braver grow.
Yet still that trembling heart would wake and cry,
'Dear Honorat, O brother, come to me!'
Then deeply grieving that his peace was robb'd,
The monk beshrew his sister sharp and stern,
And said, 'I will not come across the sea
For childish things that dance in air like motes
In dusty rooms! Once only, every spring,
When white as snow your cherry-trees have flower'd,
Then call, and I will come. God keep you all!'
His boat slow glided o'er the crystal sea,
He sign'd the Cross in air, but spoke no more.
Sainte Marguérite betook her to her cell,
And moan'd and wept, and spent the night in prayer.

* * * * *

'Twas August then, and all the land was baked
Beneath those Alpine heights beside the sea;
The birds were dumb, the grass like yellow flax,
The gasping mules could scarcely drag a load;
The very lemons dropt for weariness,
And lay along the terraces in showers,

Unheeded by the weary, sleeping hinds;
When, lo! in green Sainte Marguérite, the isle,
The cherries burst in snowy flake-like flower;
And laughing in her heart the nun did cry,
'Dear Honorat the good, O come to me!'
Much marvell'd that she call'd so soon again,
The monk was fain to cross the crystal sea;
But when he touch'd the strand he marvell'd more,
For like a fall of snow the orchards show'd,
And all the cherry-trees were full in flower.
So was he forced to shrive the sisterhood,
And counsel Marguérite the livelong day.
And thus each month was bound to marvel still,
For twelve times yearly did those cherries bloom,
Twelve times St. Honorat must cross the sea.
The gray-hair'd hind who told me this brief tale
Would tip it with a moral. 'See,' he said,
'How even saints obey when women will!'

LITTLE CHILDREN.

(*From the French of Marie Jenna.*)

BRIGHT children, laughing in your careless glee,
With rippling laughter like a brook
Which rolleth pebbles swiftly, merrily,
From many a mountain nook;
Your joyous voices smooth the wrinkled brow,
And like forgotten dreams awake
The long-gone past; in vivid careless flow
My early friends and joys come back.
So do we see, in misty autumn days,
On yellowing bush the swallows crowd;
With eager cries they chide their mates' delays,
Then fill the air with wingèd cloud.
Bright children, laughing on the daisied grass,
I taste with you a bygone day,
And all the fretful pain of years doth pass
While ye still laugh away.

Fair children, in your innocence so blest,
As from green sod the snowdrop springs,
Your childish hearts are like a hidden nest,
Where peace doth brood on feather'd wings;
When questions rise, a word your trouble stills,
Your eyes are pure from image dark;

Your minds God's likeness keep, make firm your wills,
  Let faith be shrined in stainless ark!
And while the learnèd set their brains adrift,
  Or with their footrule mysteries plumb,
Your hearts and eyes to heaven ever lift,
  And strike the loud-mouth'd tempter dumb.
Fair children, playing in the chancel dim,
  With clasped hands at dying day,
With eyes upon the Rood, and hearts on Him
  Who loves you—ever pray!

Tired children, when your joyous day is spent,
  And sinks the red sun slowly down,
When slowly too the heart feels downward bent,
  And all its weakness fain would own;
When darkness spreads its shadow-curtains gray,
  And laugh and jest and game are done,
And man alone must face his lonely way,
  In doubt if he tow'rd heav'n be boune;
When e'en the fool, bereft of love or fear,
  Must tremble in that silent hour,
And lend the voice of God unwilling ear,
  And cease to mock His awful power;
Then, children, sleeping in your dreamless rest,
  While angels watch and ward aye keep,
By mother's love still cherish'd—heaven blest—
  Sleep, God's own children, sleep.

GOSSAMER THREADS.

*'Fil de la Sainte Vierge.'**

RED lay the rustling leaves along the lanes,
Ripe chestnuts smote the grass with sullen blows,
From russet oaks rain'd dropping fruity cups,
And scarlet berries hung in every brake.
The sun had scarcely risen from earth's rim,
And all the western sky was purple dark,
When gleaming through the level bars of cloud
I spied a Lady floating on the air,
In robes of colour fleck'd with orient pearl;
Most fair, most pure, most wondrous bright was she,—
Her hair like ripening wheat-ears flow'd adown
Her virgin face; her large eyes, softly fix'd,
Show'd neither blue nor brown, so veil'd their lids,
So thick their shady fringe of darken'd gold.
Her mantle floated like a deeper sky;
Her small hands bore a staff of milk-white wool,
And spun it, softly waving to and fro;
Till falling, falling, ever falling down,

* The pretty legend which originated this name for the gossamer was beautifully embodied in a drawing by Mr. Armitage, in *the Royal Academy* Exhibition for 1869.

The meshy web did cover all the earth,
And weft o'er field and hedgerow, wold and lawn.
Meseem'd it bound the world in one wide net
Of love, and silken bond of brotherhood.
The while I gazed, rapt, wondering at this sight,
I saw the heavenly weaver knit full fast
Her myriad threads with waving flitting hands,
And knot each mesh, and twine the glistering threads
From every circle in concentric rings,
Till every part she shaped in perfect growth,
And spread the mazy pattern o'er the world;
And while she labour'd, like a rhythmic chime
Of far-off bells, came through the air this song:

Twine the spotless thread
From milk-white staff and hand;
Ne'er shall earth-stain'd web
Be spun from stainless strand.

Bathe the twisted thread
Within the Crystal Sea;
Thence the woven web
Shall clean and spotless be.

Weave the air-borne thread,
Mother and Maid in one—
Thus thy fragile web
Shall bind us to God's Throne.

As ceased the song, I faintly, faintlier heard,
As if updrawn, an 'Alleluia' clear,
In voice so sweet that all my sense was drown'd.
But when the silence fell I look'd again;
Then saw the Lady beg, with upraised hands,
A gift of dew from airy mist and cloud,
Earth-born, and stored from earth's own radiate heat,
To scatter grateful moisture on its breast.
This kindly shower she pour'd upon her web,
Then smiled to see it changed to woven pearl;
And as she smiled, the iridescent light
Burst forth with dazzling gleam, and smote the woof,
And every pearl became a rainbow gem.

Then many voices 'Alleluia' sang,
Far off and farther through the fields of air,
To Him who rides the clouds and stormy winds,
And casts His ice in morsels; giveth snow
Or hail to smite, and then lets drop the dew
In gentle showers of pitying love; and while
He decks the spring and summer with rich joy,
Spreads tender beauty round the dying year,
And failing strength and loss and sharpest grief,
And counts each falling hair of wintry life.

THE SHEPHERDESS OF FINOJOSA.

(*Spanish vaqueyra, or cowherd song.*)

NEVER on the frontier steeps,
Never yet was beauty seen,
Like the shepherdess who keeps
The flocks of Finojosa.

Near by Calatravegna,
Near by Santa Maria,
Stony rocks and cliffs uplift
Barren peaks with split and rift.
There I laid me down and slept,
There above me softly stept,
Spinning as she sang 'O là!'
The maid of Finojosa.

O'er the turf she glided soft,
Quickly then I sprang aloft,
Other shepherds spoke her fair,
Praised her purple-shining hair,
Her deep-fringed lids so lowly,
Her upraised eyes so holy.
Nothing could I say but 'Ah,
Sweet maid of Finojosa!'

Never April's* freshest rose
Burst its prison to unclose
Fragrant beauty like to thine,
In the morning dew to shine.
Once to see thee, farewell peace,
Never more my heart release;
Rashly I have met thee, ah,
Bright maid of Finojosa!

What could urge such sleep unwise?
Better ne'er unclose my eyes,
Waking thus to stand at gaze,
Lost my freedom in amaze.
Captive, I in chains am bound,
Speak she must to swage my wound.
'Maid,' I cry, 'O, tell me where
The Rose of Finojosa!'

Smiled the maid, yet spinning still,
Ne'er a look for good or ill;
'What you mean I well should know'—
Softly dropt those words so low—
'Shepherd, spare your needless pain,
Never speak of love again;
Love is not for me, O là!
Poor maid of Finojosa!'

* On the southern coast of Spain and France the rose-blowing time.

TWO CHILDREN.

THERE was a level reach of marble sand
Washing the base of ruddy tumbled rocks,
Like waveless dimpled sea. On this we spread
The cloth and cates, and made our picnic there.
All round us flew the snowy kittiwakes
And guillemots, and little crested gulls
Soar'd, crying feebly, in the sunny air;
While far away at sea the gannet fish'd
In lordly calm and free disdain of fear.
It was the happy birthday of a child
As happy as the day, all sun and sheen.
She sat enfolded in a niche of rock;
Her flowing hair and largest limpid eyes,
And peachy cheeks, clear-tinted 'gainst the stone,
A living flower crannied in the cliff.
Not many words she spoke, but answer'd soft
To any question, lifting those great eyes,
Crystal with truth as Una's, but so sweet
That Una's lion in most melting ruth
Should tamer yield him to that pleading gaze;
Her words and smiles shower'd brightest on the boy
Beside her; petting, teasing, giving fruits,

Withdrawing; playing all those elfish pranks
A boy alone can frame in boy's wild glee.
He was a boy to love; whate'er he did
You needs must love him more. I see him now,
With wavy sunbright hair and darkest eyes—
Ah, boy, you stole your sweetest mother's eyes!—
Which flash and dance with mirth, and then fall veil'd,
All angel-pure, reflecting solemn thought
And sacred image in their depths serene.
Whene'er you tell him tale of knightly deed,
Of daring act to save or help the weak,
Or lay heroic of some far-off time,
His parted lips and lifted eyes are fix'd,
Enchain'd, and rapt, as acting still the scene.
Who loves such telling grows in active love,
And feeding thus on lore of noble deeds
Still ripens to the doing. Day by day
His knightly tender character unfolds
Beside his sister's fairness; day by day
He guards and fends her in all childish straits;
Bestows on her his treasures, gives her joy,
And sets his joys aside.
O, mayst thou grow
In large unselfish aims! Be noble, true;
Thy sister's lifelong staff; thy father's pride;
Thy mother's priceless gift for evermore.

A FIRST COMMUNION.

WHITE maid, like snowflake at my door,
Why comest in such weed?
Thy pure sweet face is fresh with joy,
Thy hands with flowers.
Say, hast thou ended life's annoy
By one brave holy deed?
Amid life's showers,
Say, hast thou leave to sit in waveless calm for evermore?

Not so; thy cloudless day must die,
Thy stainless garb wax dim;
But fed with Hidden Manna still,
Thy strength shall last.
Thy violets, wash'd by living rill,
Shall purple o'er its brim;
Thy lot is cast,
And thou with whiter lilies shall be crownèd by and by.

MARY.

AND hast thou left us, Sister, Mother, Wife,
Without a message or a brief farewell;
With work unfinish'd, with thy days untold,
With all thy redden'd fruitage hanging ripe?
Art thou so weary of the dusty road,
That though th' allotted span is out of sight,
Thou needs must lie beside the way to sleep?
I would not grudge thee, dear, to rest, but O,
My heart is pierced to know that rest for aye!
I cannot lose thee, Sister; thou hast been
My refuge, staff, and comfort through rough ways,
When clouds and darkness swept across the stars,
And all my reckoning in thick gloom was lost.
We cannot lose thee, Mother. Who will lead
Thy children upward on the heavenly way;
Lead gently, firmly, with that guiding hand
Which moulds with wisdom, softens still with love?
Who shall inform thy sons with knightly mind,
Observance to all women, tenderness
With weak and fragile things—the patient strength
Of manhood? Who thy daughters hourly tend
With influence, refinement, knowledge, grace;

Till every natural gift perfected shine
With added culture, crown'd with woman's crown
Of strength and meekness, framed with loving heart,
And pure religious earnestness of will?
O, how to lose thee, loyal, loving Wife!
Or who shall gauge the loss of wedded love
Which thou, above all women I have known,
Distill'd from thy great heart in flowing streams?
Thy husband was thy lord, thy law, thy life;
To serve him was thy honour, thy best joy,
His will unspoken, spoken, still fulfill'd,
And all thy aim to bear the larger load.
Well may he praise thee, wifely, noble heart;
Thy children bless thee, Mother! * *
* * * * * Yellow leaves
Are falling through the rain as thus I bid
Thy calm white face farewell. Again I tread
Life's narrow road, and miss thee to the end.

THE END.

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